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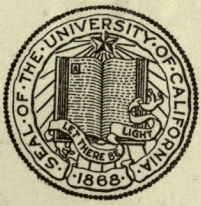

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THE NATURAL HISTORY

OF

THE BIRDS OF IRELAND.

THE

NATURAL HISTORY

OF

THE BIRDS OF IRELAND,

INDIGENOUS AND MIGRATORY,

CONTAINING

DESCRIPTIONS OF THE HABITS, MIGRATIONS, OCCURRENCE, AND ECONOMY, OF THE 261 SPECIES COMPRISED IN THE FAUNA.

BY

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TO

ROBERT BALL, LL. D.,

AS

A MARK OF PROFOUND ESTEEM

FOR

THE MANY AND SUCCESSFUL EFFORTS MADE BY HIM

TO PROMOTE THE STUDY

OF

NATURAL SCIENCE IN IRELAND,

THIS VOLUME

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED BY

THE AUTHOR.

M366809

PREFACE.

THE present Natural History of the Birds of Ireland has been the result of many years' observation of their habits. Collecting and arranging that information, I have ventured, with considerable diffidence, to place it before the public. The late William Thompson, Esq., of Belfast, whose friendship I for many years enjoyed, on various occasions expressed a desire to see a cheap work on the subject published, regretting at the same time the unavoidable expense attending his own, which had prevented its circulation to the extent expected.

For the purpose of making this book as popular and comprehensive as possible, many scientific technicalities have been left out, as tending to confuse the general reader without conferring any additional information, whilst such generic or specific names, essential to the subject, have in every instance their English signification attached. Intended to be within the comprehension of the *general reader*, it is hoped at the same time to be as available to *students*, and particularly to persons commencing or pursuing this branch of Natural History: for that purpose many details will be found

through the work, recording the occurrence of the rarer visitants to our island, and in every instance specifying the habitat or country they are indigenous to. This arrangement might have been difficult were it not for the assistance afforded by the works of Temminck, Degland, and Schlegel, together with those of other distinguished naturalists, whose information is acknowledged in the text. Mr. Thompson's work has afforded me considerable facility in referring to notices of species which I had previously transmitted to him, which was fortunate, as in many cases I had no copy except what occurred in my correspondence with that gentleman, and which he has so amply acknowledged in his work.

For the further information of the student the modern French scientific names have been added, together with a carefully revised and copious index to the systematic names in both languages; whilst in several instances notices have been introduced of the appearance of the same species in other countries, for the purpose of illustrating some peculiarity of habit not observable in our own.

For the better economy of space and consequent saving of expense, I have omitted a description of the plumage of the birds, preferring to give a familiar description of their habits and migrations rather than to occupy the work with a quantity of matter not sufficiently attractive to the general reader.

I cannot omit the present opportunity to express my thanks to those kind friends from whose observation so much benefit has been received: to Mr. Richard Glennon for much valuable information about the birds frequent-

ing the western coast of Ireland, and for many experienced observations when engaged setting up specimens for my collection; to Joshua Lamprey, Esq., T. C. D., for many interesting notices upon the habits of birds, and for many valuable specimens procured by him; to William Yarrell, Esq., F. L. S., &c., my thanks are especially due, for the prompt and kind manner with which the notice of the dusky shearwater (*Puffinus obscurus*) was placed at my disposal.

J. J. W.

Dublin, *September*, 1853.

INTRODUCTION.

INTERESTING as are all sciences, perhaps none offer more inducements to study than that of ornithology. The varied forms and beautiful plumage of the feathered tribes, the pleasures derived from their song, and the general interest of their habits, render it one continually presenting us with the most attractive images of nature's handiwork.

To the naturalist, perhaps, no country in Europe affords more interest in its Fauna than that of Ireland. Insular in position, and comprising upon its surface every variety of natural character,—its mountains, lakes, rivers, and bogs, its precipitous ranges upon the northern and western coasts, and the sloping sandy levels of the east and south,—combine in offering localities admirably adapted to the habits of the various tribes frequenting them. Of equal interest from the fact of its situation in being placed at the extremity of Western Europe, and nearest to the great American continent, it offers peculiar interest to the researches of the ornithologist. But unfortunately these advantages, so prized in other countries, are neglected in our own; a peculiar apathy appears to occupy the minds of a great portion of the classes, which invests the study of natural history with many fancied difficulties; though at the present time the observation made by the excellent rector of Selborne, some seventy years since, that

"Ireland was a new field, and a country little known to the naturalist," has been refuted by the labours of those men whose names have become synonymous with the sciences they had enlightened, and whose research is appreciated in every scientific circle in Europe. Yet we must recollect, with some regret for our own unworked energies, that in England and Scotland there are found men, like those weavers of Spitalfields, who, self-taught and well-informed, have cast additional light upon the science whose study they had made a pleasure and recreation.

Natural history, whose study has attracted the attention and displayed the energies of Linnæus, and Cuvier, and Buffon—whose characteristics were thought worthy of note in the age that produced the Stagyrite and Pliny—whose principles we see followed by those great minds, linked thought in thought, from the earliest days of civilized history to the age which sufficiently indicated its progress by ushering in the master mind of Humboldt—many and worthy have been its describers. Natural history has even had its martyrs, who sacrificed their lives for the advancement of a cherished science, penetrating to unknown regions in defiance of health, already worn by unremitted labours and unwearied exertions. Thus we have seen the ardent and illustrious Peron, expiring after producing the first offerings of his talent; and, sinking under his exertions, the weaver of Paisley, whose name, as the ornithologist of America, is familiar to every one. In our own day we have seen Audubon depicting nature in the back woods of America, and Gould adding to our knowledge in the remoteness of our antipodes.

Many men neglect natural history from the mere inanity of their minds, but there are none so wilful as to close their eyes and refuse to behold the noblest of those forms which have been created to afford them raiment and food, occupation in tending, and a constant source of pleasure in

observing. This, to a philosophic mind, appears more criminal when the observer is placed in a situation circumscribed in extent, without any of those drawbacks met with in pursuing science upon the area of a continent. And for the same reasons so much more additional honour is attached to those classes in England and Scotland, who, acquainted with the natural productions of their country, value opportunities unheedingly neglected in our own.

It is not in our province to write a dissertation upon the subject; but it must be a matter of regret that, with the exception of an honoured few, the light emanating from natural history has not as yet dawned in Ireland. Many are these neglected opportunities, which are found amid the gray, mist-clad summits of our mountain ranges, where the silence is alone broken by the "kleeking" of the golden eagle, or the inspiriting challenging of the grouse. Along the towering precipices of the west,—Europe's first barrier against the fury of the Atlantic; tenanted during summer by myriads of sea-fowl, whose confused cries alone equal the frothing of the waves, rushing half-way up each cliff; localities where the sea eagle sails past as if in wonder at our intrusion, and where the raven topping the pinnacle of the rock stands stately as if on the mast of some old Norse viking. But we have yet fair plains inland, where the skylark seems untiring in its melody; where far below at the brookside the heron wades watchful and silent, his course marked with the air bubbles floating downwards upon the stream; whilst on some moss-grown cairn the cuckoo sways itself, uttering the joyous call that some few days before had sounded gleefully under the acacias of a more favoured land. Again, we have great rivers rolling to the sea, whose only argosies are the wild fowl congregated in thousands upon their surface. All are there! the stately and snow-white hooper; the bernacle crowded together in a countless multitude; the long strings of the various ducks

calling clamorously in their flight; whilst, glancing through the uncertain haze, immense flocks of shore birds are momentarily seen ere they as suddenly disappear. Truly Spenser said rightly, "It is yet a most beautifull and sweete countrey as any under heaven."

In summer thousands of birds, attracted by various causes, leave the quarters they had occupied during winter, and enliven each hedgerow with their melody. The gannet appears upon the sea, and the tern occupies in hundreds each islet, to commence the cares they had arrived for; whilst far away on remote rocks by the ocean, where the surge rolls over during winter, the summit is carpeted by hundreds of curious shapeless forms, screaming incessantly for food. All is enjoyment! even the stormy petrel has left her boundless dominion to take a short rest, and again lead out her progeny to forage amidst the tumult of a tempest they had evoked by their unhallowed presence.

Winter arrives, and with it many changes. We hear no more the "craking" of the land-rail, or see with delight the swallow skimming over the river-side. The imperative rigours of an Arctic season have replaced those varied forms with others which harmonize with her latitudes, and whose strange cries sufficiently indicate the remoteness of the lands they had sojourned in. At once each available locality is tenanted by its army of occupation; the inland lake, the sheltered estuary, and the deep water outside the shore-line, has its garrison. In the day the eye is attracted by strange columns and lines of wild-fowl, rapidly urging their way as if eager to escape from those regions which had refused them sustenance; whilst at night the ear is charmed by the loud rushing sounds of their pinions over head, and by their startling call-notes, clearly and distinctly borne upon the frosty air.

When we arrive to examine more minutely those forms, we are struck with the admirable adaptation which Nature has

exhibited in the situations she has intended them to live in. The eagle, placed amidst lone and remote solitudes upon the mountain ; the goldcrest, in the inland and sheltered plantation ; the dunlin, upon the bleak and barren extent of shore; and the seagull, floating securely upon that element where it obtains subsistence,—each form is pregnant with meaning: the hooked bill and sharp talons of the merlin; the wide mouth and great extent of wings of the swift; the long, curved beak and corresponding length of tarsi of the curlew; and the broad, mud-sifting bill of the mallard, have each their history; there is no intricacy or attempt at concealment; Nature has hidden nothing, but has placed all things before our understanding, with the intention of displaying those manifold forms which have been created by the Almighty to minister to our wants and pleasures.

NATURAL HISTORY

OF

THE BIRDS OF IRELAND.

ORDER I.—RAPTORES (BIRDS OF PREY).

FAMILY I.—VULTURIDÆ (VULTURES).

Genus I.—Vultur (Vulture).

Species 1.—The Griffon Vulture.

Vultur fulvus. Briss.
Le Griffon. Temm.

THE Griffon Vulture is a species of such extreme rarity that it has not as yet been added to the Fauna of England or Scotland. Obtained in a single instance in Ireland, which was captured in a living state, on the estate of the Earl of Shannon, in the county of Cork, it came into the possession of that nobleman, and was offered by him to the collection in the Gardens of the Zoological Society, but, unfortunately, it died before arrangements were completed for its transmission. By the direction of Lord Shannon it was carefully preserved, and then added to the collection in Trinity College. From that nobleman Mr. R. Ball (now Dr. Ball) learned that the bird was purchased by his steward for 2*s.* 6*d.* of a peasant, who caught it upon the sea shore in the neighbourhood. Its plumage being in good order tended to indicate that it had not escaped from confinement.*

Habitat—Eastern Europe.

* Thompson.

FAMILY II.—FALCONIDÆ (FALCONS).

Genus II.—Falco (Falcon).

Species 2.—The Gyr Falcon.

Falco gyrfalco. Linn.
Faucon gerfaut. Temm.

Gerfalcon. Greenland Falcon. Norwegian Falcon.

The Gyr, the largest and most powerful of the falcons, is a species very unusual in its occurrence in our Fauna. Of great beauty in the plumage of the adult, but two instances have occurred in Ireland: the first specimen,* shot in the county of Donegal, when on wing above a rabbit warren; and the second by the gamekeeper of Lord Gormanstown, on the estate near Drogheda, in the winter of 1851. Of equal rarity in the plumage of the immature bird, two specimens have also been obtained, one in the north of Ireland, and the other, a male bird,† shot at Ballina, county of Mayo, by C. Knox, Esq., towards the end of December, 1847; the light blue tarsi of which offered a curious contrast with the usual yellowish colour observable in the other falcons. A native of northern latitudes, the true habitat of this falcon is around the precipices that fringe the coasts of Greenland and Norway, where, breeding in remote and inaccessible eyries, it finds a constant supply of food amidst the countless multitudes of sea-fowl which frequent these shores during summer for the purposes of incubation. Possessing the greatest courage, we see the admirable compactness of form, great sweep of wing, and talons of corresponding size and strength, which have placed the gyr as the most powerful of the family it belongs to.

The most prized and valued of the many hawks which during the middle ages furnished such a source of amusement to the high and princely: to obtain its earliest notice we must retrograde in thought to that period when the hands of their feudal possessors replaced for a time the sword and gauntlet with the glove and falcon. Protected by laws, and offering equal attractions to the Court as to the Church, the king waived the routine of Court ceremony to enjoy the flight of some favourite falcon, whilst the mitred prelate thundered from the pulpit against the hawk-stealers who had invaded

* Thompson. † In the author's collection.

his sanctuary. Penetrating even into the precincts of conventual life, we find the falcon attracting the admiration of the most noble of the inmates; and to so much advantage that in the fifteenth century the prioress of Slopewell nunnery gave the result of her observations to posterity in the "Book of St. Albans." Possessing a peculiar nicety of discrimination, we observe in it the various hawks employed for hawking, adapted to the different ranks of those privileged to keep them. Thus we have "the hawks belonging to an emperor, the eagle, vulture, and merloun; to a king, the gyr falcon, and tiercel of the gyr falcon; to a prince, the falcon gentle, and the tiercel gentle; to a duke, the falcon of the rock; to an earl, the falcon peregrine; to a baron, the bustard; to a knight, the sucre and sucret; to an esquire, the lanere and the lanerd; to a lady, the merlyon; to a young gentleman, the hobby; to a priest, the sparrow-hawk; to a holy-water clerk, the musket; to a yeoman, the goshawk; to a poor man, the tercel of the goshawk; to a knave or servant, the kesterel." Possessing the minds of all those classes, their love for the falcon became a complete mania, so much so that it was nothing unusual for knights proceeding to church to have their missal in the shape of some "goodly falcon" sustained upon the wrist; whilst the clergy became so enamoured of hawking that their undisguised admiration of it caused them to be the subjects of the lampoons and satires of the poets of the day.

The present species, receiving the distinctive appellation of Norwegian falcon, became of such rarity and value that kings did not hesitate to receive them as presents and bribes from their subjects. "King John, having received two Norwegian hawks from Geoffry Fitzpierce, for allowing one Walter le Madena permission to import a hundred-weight of cheese; and another merchant, Nicholas the Dane, agreed to give the king a hawk every time he came to England, that he might have liberty to traffic through the king's dominions."

Valued in our own day for the purposes of hawking, the late Sir Charles Giesecke once mentioned, in a lecture, of having been present at a hawking party in Norway where a gyr falcon was flown at a hare; the bird clutched the hare with one foot, and the stump of a tree with the other, with such tenacity that, from the speed of the hare, the leg of the gyr falcon was torn from its socket, and being unable to extricate its claws, both perished. Better attended to in Persia, where the gyr falcon is trained to the chase, each bird before flight is defended with stout leather trowsers to prevent a

like casualty, it being the habit of the gyr falcon to seize with one leg and drag the other along the ground in search of an obstacle to arrest its course.*

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Species 3.—The Peregrine Falcon.

Falcon peregrinus. Lin.
Faucon pellerin. Temm.

Goshawk. Blue Hawk. Cliff Hawk.

Smaller in size than the gyr, the peregrine is possessed of the same compactness of form, and determined courage in its pursuit after the quarry, which distinguish the other. Occurring in limited numbers around the precipitous headlands of our island, the peregrine is by no means a common bird, and is seldom observed except during the breeding season, and then within some distance of the eyrie, whence both birds sally out to foray for themselves and young. At one period, more plentiful in our own immediate vicinity, the peregrine had four breeding stations, Bray Head, Howth, Ireland's Eye, and Lambay, all of which are now deserted except Lambay, where a pair occasionally nidify.

The natural position of Ireland in the ranges of lofty precipices which partly fringe the coasts must have afforded a secure shelter to those falcons, so eagerly sought after in the feudal ages, and which we find prohibited from being exported by the laws of Henry IV., 1481. "Whatsoever merchant shall carry any hawk out of Ireland shall pay for every goshawk, 13*s.* 4*d.*; for a tiercel, 6*s.* 8*d.*; for a falcon 10*s.*, and the poundage upon the same pain. And the person that bringeth any such hawk or hawks to the king shall have a reasonable reward, or else the same hawk or hawks for his trouble."

Occurring in many of the old annals of the country, the hawk which we find mentioned is, doubtless, the peregrine, of which Roderick, king of Connaught, presented several to Henry II.; and in Henry VIII.'s time we find a present to the Marquis Dessarages, a Spanish grandee, consisting of two Irish hawks and greyhounds. Presented to kings, and by kings to their nobles, as we have seen this falcon, it was reserved for Gerald Fitzgerald (Silken Thomas) to give the peregrine a more elevated flight, when he dispatched Sir Dominick Poer to the Emperor Charles V. "with twelve

* Malcolm's "Sketches of Persia."

great hawks, and fourteen fair horses or hobbys," as an inducement to assist him in his warfare against the Pale.*

Indeed, we can scarcely wonder at the interest that hawking excited in a bygone time, when we see the falcon in the present day belled and tasselled upon his block, his form stiff and upright, and each dignified movement made as if with a perfect consciousness of the terrible powers he is possessed of. With the peregrine the form is well adapted to the immense velocity which it is known to attain, and which, in the full rushing swoop after the quarry, has been calculated at a ratio of fifty to one hundred and fifty miles in an hour. Thus we might imagine one of those birds swooping from an altitude in the air and hurling to the earth the heron or the mallard it had pursued. However, to all water birds the water is a sanctuary never invaded by the peregrine, ducks generally succeeding in escaping by diving, an instance of which is afforded by a simile of Dante—

> "Thus dives the mallard underneath the flood,
> By the fleet falcon on the lake pursued—
> Baffled, the bird ascends, and seeks his lord."

On one occasion a mallard, not so fortunate as the one instanced by Dante, was found "in possession" of a male peregrine, which was shot, and stretched lifeless upon the quivering form of his prey, where life was not yet extinct. Retribution had at least dealt sternly, and overtaken him "red-footed" in the strife.

Indigenous.

Species 4.—The Hobby.

Falco subbuteo. Linn.
Faucon hobereau. Temm.

This species, which we might designate as a peregrine in miniature, is of extreme rarity in its occurrence,—one specimen, obtained in 1822,† being the only authentic intance we have, which was shot by Mr. Parker, of Cork, on the garden wall of the family mansion at Carrigrohan. Rare in its distribution in England, the hobby appears only as a rare summer visitant, where its habits have been remarked as similar to the other falcons, excepting a marked predilection which it exhibits in the pursuit of the skylark.

Habitat—Eastern Europe.

* Annals of the Four Masters. † Thompson.

Species 5.—The Orange-Legged Hobby.

Falco Rufipes. Bechstein.
Faucon à pieds rouge ou Hober. Temm.

This elegantly marked falcon, so extremely beautiful in its adult plumage, has never been obtained in that state in Ireland; but, similar with the hobby, it has only occurred in a single instance in immature plumage, which was shot in the county of Wicklow in the summer of 1832, and is preserved in the collection of T. W. Warren, Esq., of this city, having been presented to that gentleman by the shooter, who killed it in his own yard, whither it had the temerity to follow and strike down a pigeon fully its own size. Rarely met with in England; it has never occurred in Scotland.

Habitat—Eastern Europe.

Species 6.—The Merlin.

Falco æsalon. Ray.
Faucon emerillon. Temm.

Sparrow-hawk.

This beautiful and spirited little falcon, the smallest and most courageous of the Irish falconidæ, is very unusual in its occurrence, and appears to frequent principally the mountainous portions of the island. Occasionally a specimen may be obtained about Dublin, but rare in its occurrence, we seldom observe it at any time nearer than the Dublin and Wicklow mountains, where it breeds. Now perched and forming an apex to some projecting crag, his eye keenly observant of approach, he remains unwilling to fly until the last moment, when, skimming down, and again rising on the wing, he shoots along with the utmost rapidity,—a motion of the tail and wing, and he sweeps along closer to the ground, each hedgerow in his way he approaches closely, rises, and dips over, and displays as long as he continues in sight the same easy, gliding motion. Exhibiting the most determined courage and pertinacity of purpose, once the merlin succeeds in starting his quarry, every movement of the doomed bird is followed up in a succession of rushes upon the wing, until the prey is clutched, and both come to the earth almost stunned and breathless. In one instance, remarked by a friend at Belgard, near the Dublin mountains, a merlin was observed to glance over a park wall at the same instant that a woodquest took flight from the centre of the field. Both birds escaped his view in a

moment, and were no more thought of until his return home, when a workman brought in a female merlin and a woodquest, both of which were killed by the one discharge, and although obtained nearly a mile and a half distant, they were doubtless the birds which had been first remarked by my informant.

Prized in the days of falconry, the merlin was selected as the hawk most suited to the fair admirers of hawking, equally from its beauty of plumage as its courage, both of which appeared so well fitted to typify the attractions of the gallant cavalier who in most instances had presented it. Admired by them with a perfect enthusiasm, it was as much the companion of the boudoir and drawing-room as of the chase; so that we find in the "Lay of the Last Minstrel" a lady represented with a merlin upon her wrist during the celebration of her marriage rites:—

"The Ladye by the altar stood,
Of sable velvet her array,
. . . . . .
A merlin sat upon her wrist,
Held by a leash of silken twist."

Indigenous.

Species 7.—The Kestrel.

Falco tinnunculus. Linn.
Faucon cresserelle. Temm.

Wind-hover. Sparrow-hawk.

The Kestrel is the only falcon that we can denominate common, as it is widely distributed in any situation which affords it food and shelter. Not confined to locality, it is found equally at home amidst the bold basaltic columns of the north, as when tenanting the immense precipices of the western coast; and, in inland situations, it occupies for an abode the ruined and ivy-clad tower and castle, where the "Reiving Baron" of the feathered tribes still holds the sway once exercised by its feudal possessor. Very common about Dublin, the kestrel has usurped the breeding places where the peregrine once reared its brood, and breeds at Lambay, Bray Head, and Howth, in considerable numbers; indeed, so common are they at the last locality, that there are few who have visited its bold precipitous rocks who have not observed its habits.

In the summer of 1852 I had the pleasure of observing a male and female, accompanied by their three young, all

of which remained in sight during the two hours I observed them. The male, perched upon a projecting rock, at intervals vociferously uttered his shrill "kleeking" note, whilst the female remained in the air with her young family, each displaying to the utmost advantage the peculiarity of their flight, which has obtained for the kestrel the appellation of wind-hover. Now motionless on the wing they appeared almost fixed objects in the air, and the next moment, gliding on some twenty feet or so, the hovering was again performed as if resting upon the wing. Whilst in search of food this beautiful evolution is mostly performed, more especially when examining a field for small glires, or the heath, in search of some basking lizard. Less courageous than the other hawks, the kestrel mostly preys upon mice, insects, and at times small birds, remains of which I have found in the stomachs of several dissected by me.

Indigenous.

Genus III.—Accipiter (Hawk).

Species 8.—The Goshawk.

Accipiter palumbarius. Linn.
L'Autour. Temm.

This fine species, the first recorded instance of whose occurrence is the present, was obtained in the autumn of 1846 in the county of Longford, and was found upon dissection, by Mr. R. Glennon, to have been an immature male bird.

A considerable deal of confusion appears respecting this bird, as the peregrine and harriers have been confounded with it under the term of goshawk, that name being applied to all the large raptorial birds in the country; whilst the term of sparrow-hawk is applied to the smaller falcons. The present species is of extreme rarity in England, and of occasional occurrence in Scotland.

Habitat—Central Europe.

Species 9.—The Sparrow-hawk.

Accipiter nisus. Linn.
L'Epervier. Temm.

The most common of our birds of prey, the sparrow-hawk, is well known, and exists in considerable numbers in any thickly wooded portion of the country. It is characterized and at once distinguished from the true falcons by its slender form,

colour of the irides, shortness of wings, and length of tail and tarsi. Its food consists of leverets, young rabbits, mice, partridges, and pigeons, with an endless variety of smaller birds.

For its spirit and daring, few of the more noble falcons can compete with it; its unparalleled audacity rendering none of the smaller animals safe from its depredations. All places are alike to him:—at one time, plundering the dove-cot; at another, skimming over the farm-yard, he purloins a chicken; again, dashing furiously against the cages in the public streets; and lastly, following his terrified quarry, when the latter seeks a refuge in the presence of man, fearless of all obstacles, it is pursued through the open window, clutched up and away. The farmer takes his gun, and vows vengeance upon the plunderer of his-dove cot, as he looks on the scattered feathers of some favourite pigeon. The mistress calls the household about her in fruitless wrath, when she sees her pet chicken unwillingly performing an aerial excursion; whilst the fair owner of the outraged cage-bird, more frightened than hurt, looks unutterable things after the foiled plunderer, as he wings away; which, however, is not always the case, as he sometimes exchanges his life for his temerity, striking himself with violence against the bars of the cage.

Ask the gamekeeper if there are sparrow-hawks in his neighbourhood, and you are shown the door of some outhouse covered with the mutilated remains of many, and with an askance look, asked pithily, "What's them?" Yet, notwithstanding that every man's hand is against him, we observe no apparent diminution of numbers.

Even when brought to the ground wounded, the courage of the sparrow-hawk remains unabated. Lying on his back, he prepares to take no quarter, and determines to sell his life as dearly as possible. The convulsive clutching of his talons, his loud screams, and glistening eye, intimidate, and render a near approach not desirable; and when taken at last he inflicts sundry ugly gashes on the hands of the incautious tyro.

Early in spring the sparrow-hawk looks out for a suitable place to nidify, and, like the kestrel, seldom forms a nest for itself, but takes possession of one deserted by the magpie or rook. It will also rear its brood in the fissures and clefts of rocks; the number of eggs varying from three to five, in colour bluish white, spotted or blotched with reddish brown.

When the young are in an advanced state, the parent birds prove abundant caterers, and destroy an immense number of small birds to satisfy their endless craving. Some idea may

be formed from the fact, mentioned by an eminent author, that in one nest the number of sixteen dead birds lay piled about the gaping young.

When searching for food the sparrow-hawk flies a short distance from the ground, and if unsuccessful perches on some commanding situation to observe.

There! look at that old gate, and the little slim pirate perched almost upright upon the topmost bar, his bright eye observant of everything about him. A blackbird hops out from the hedge, and prepares to make a meal of some stray worm. But, alas! for the expectations of men and merles, both being doomed to disappointment, the worm survives another day. A slight move of the hawk is seen by the blackbird, and the blackbird's loud, startled cry of alarm is uttered in terrified haste. A whir, and down with lightning-like rapidity darts the hawk, and away with the pursuer and the pursued, both for life; one to take, the other to save it. The blackbird's sanctuary is close at hand in the hedgerow, and every nerve is strained to reach it; but a hurried clutch, a short cry, and the unequal race is over. The sparrow-hawk stands over his prostrate prey, and screams his exulting war-whoop like the red man by the Ohio. His wings fall like a curtain, and enfold the death-struggle of the lovely songster, while his sharp talons are finishing the strife beneath.

Indigenous.

Genus IV.—Aquila (Eagle).

Species 10.—The Golden Eagle.

Aquila chrysætos. Linn.
Aigle royal. Temm.

Black Eagle. Ring-Tailed Eagle.

The most majestic of our native birds, the appearance of the golden eagle is one of the most beautiful sights nature affords to the observer. The same when sailing down the valley from his eyrie on the mountain,—we look upon his well-braced and muscular proportions, when reft from his "pinnacle of power," and lifeless upon the table of the anatomist.

Stamped by nature as a robber, his commission for plunder is exhibited in the powerful talons she has armed him with, and the strong, hooked bill which aids him in destroying the objects of his pursuit.

In Ireland we might denominate the golden eagle as a rare bird, so seldom is it obtained by the bird-preservers of the city. Frequenting the most remote and inaccessible haunts

it can obtain, the golden eagle is only found tenanting our highest mountain ranges, where, ever watchful of approach, an opportunity is rarely presented to the shooter. The greater number of instances where I have known eagles to be obtained have been by chance shots. A fine adult male in my own possession was thus obtained in the county of Kerry. A gentleman, grouse-shooting upon the hills, observed the eagle pursued by two hooded crows, and all passing him within some twenty yards; he fired, and the eagle fell to the charge destined for the next grouse that sprung.

An eagle was at one time captured in the county of Meath by a gamekeeper, who, surprising the bird sleeping after a surfeit off a dead sheep in the neighbourhood, conceived the idea of taking him alive, and for that purpose approached noiselessly and clasped the bird in his arms. The eagle recovering, and unable to use his wings, clutched with his talons, one of which entered the man's chest, the hind claw meeting the others underneath the flesh. The man, unable to disengage the claw, strangled the bird, but the talons were yet too firmly clutched to open; taking out his knife, he severed the leg from the body, and walked with the protruding member to the village dispensary to have it removed.*

An immature golden eagle once offered to me for sale was purchased by a friend for five shillings; it was as large as the adult, and became very tame in confinement. Having the range of a large stable, the lichen-covered rock he had perched upon on the mountain was exchanged for the top of a wicker crate. His favourite food was cats, contributions of which were constantly furnished by his friends; but these soon falling short, all the quiet tabbies in the neighbourhood were seduced from their firesides and flung to the eagle. In some little time, however, the inquiries were so pressing for variously described cats, which had strayed in the vicinity, and the circumstance of a velvet collar being found in a back lane, together with the fact of the eagle constantly prating his "whereabouts," induced the owner to part with him.

When a cat was flung to him, it was instantly seized, the body of the eagle thrown forward; his wings and tail enfolded the animal, whilst the bird's eye was keenly directed upon its observers, keeping the same position whilst it was aware of being watched. The cat in no instance attempted to cry out after being flung to him, but appeared to have been at once killed, the eagle never appearing to take a se-

* Mr. Glennon.

cond grasp, but to clutch more firmly its unfortunate prey. But yet the menagerie, or the confined cage, is but a poor substitute for his home on the mountain, plunderer and spoiler though he be. Perched upon the rock of his native wilds, he stands motionless, the neck closely retracted to the shoulder, and, like a true pirate, concealing his weapons of destruction: the talons are almost completely enveloped with the feathers of the abdomen. The lanceolate feathers on his neck resemble a golden collar, as if placed there by nature, to symbolize his royalty, whilst he remains perching for hours upon the same rock he had frequented for an age. But now, amid the silence of those grey rocks, the wings are slightly drooped, and he utters his shrill, impatient, "kleeking" note. Again they are folded up, each feather trimmed, and the crusted blood rubbed from his beak as he glides down, and, after a few hurried flaps, sails majestically to his foray. True for thee, O Ossian: "It was a source of delight to behold the eagle, and listen to her lonely scream."

Associated with the grandest sublimity of nature in the haunts he frequents, the nobility of this "strong sovereign of the plumy race" has been acknowledged equally in the eagle and hawk-headed divinities of the ancient Egyptians, as in the bird of Jove of the heathen mythology. Prized by rude and uncivilized nations, as presenting to their minds the most perfect resemblance of their own lawless living, the young Indian brave watches eagerly for the auspicious moment that its feathers should adorn his head-dress or his calumet; and, similarly, the Highland chieftain, or the native prince of our own land, would as soon have been destitute of dirk or skene as the feathers that graced the bonnet of one, and the "beareadh" of the other. Symbolized by the warlike nations of every age, the eagle has been displayed upon their banners and standards as an emblem of their power; and yet is he worthy of the notice which has been lavished upon him, even although a Bedouin of the hill side, with each man's hand against him.

Indigenous.

Species 11.—The Spotted Eagle.

Aquila nævia. Briss.

This beautiful little eagle, of such excessive rarity that a single specimen has only been obtained in Great Britain, was captured in January, 1845, in Cork. Coming under the notice of Mr. R. Davis of Clonmel, it was shot whilst preying upon a rab-

bit, on the estate of the Earl of Shannon. "Another eagle of the same species, and said to be similarly marked, but rather lighter in colour, had been killed a few days before. The two birds had been observed for several weeks previously sweeping over the low grounds between Castlemartyr and Claycastle, near Youghal."*

The present specimen is now preserved in the Museum of the University of Dublin.

Habitat—Eastern Europe.

Species 12.—The Sea Eagle.

Aquila albicilla. Will.
Aigle pygargue. Temm.

White-tailed Eagle.

This fine species, more widely distributed than the golden eagle, is found in any locality where its solitary haunts remain unmolested, and where it can obtain a sufficiency of food. Differing from the golden eagle in the localities it frequents, we observe the sea eagle tenanting those immense precipices which, on the north and west coasts, overhang the ocean in every variety of picturesque confusion.

With the exception of the natural associations connected with its presence, the sea eagle has neither the elegance of form which distinguishes the golden eagle, nor the same interest attached to it. Larger in size, and more robustly formed, there is a truculency of aspect conveyed in its appearance which at once reminds us of the vulture. The most pusillanimous of our larger birds, the merlin has more courage packed up in his little form than a dozen sea eagles. But yet we doubtless see in that the wise provision of nature in not bestowing sufficient courage upon those birds to make use of their immense strength, when we recollect the gyr falcon, nearly a third less in size, will "assail the swan in its airy flight, and bring it to the earth as if shot with a ball."† If the eagles possessed the similar impetuous daring of the falcons, they would be indeed formidable enemies. Laying the shore under contributions, he is generally observed sailing along in the vicinity of the precipice, or standing upon some projecting peak over the ocean, his keen eye directed upon the immense multitude of sea-fowl who are performing their busy work of incubation. Apparently having regular hunting-

* Thompson. † Scaliger.

grounds, Mr. Glennon, when engaged in mineralogical observations in Achill, could almost tell the hour when an adult sea eagle would sweep round the base of the cliff, where he was engaged in search of ore. Its appearance was singularly fine; the immense sweep of wing, the snow-white colour of the tail, and the head slowly moving round as if upon a pivot whilst he deigned to glance upon the intruder of his territory. When shouted at, the head slowly regained its position, and he winged away as slowly and sedately as he had appeared at first. Preying upon sea-fowl and rabbits, for which he stoops, and bears off when standing at their burrows, so instantly, that ere the rabbit can attempt a dash into his refuge, he is "'twixt earth and sky," some thousand feet over the ocean. At times, when forced by hunger, the sea eagle ventures to attack domestic fowl and sheep. One, shot in immature plumage upon the Galway coast, in our possession, was killed in company with an adult bird by the same shot, whilst feeding upon a sheep which had fallen over the cliffs. The adult bird, falling into the water, was carried away by the tide ere a boat could reach it.

At one period more common upon our eastern coasts, eyries were, within the last century, at Bray Head and Lambay, both of which localities afford many strange stories of the contrivances adopted to obtain the eggs or young. In many parts of Ireland projecting rocky peaks have received the appellation of the "Eagle's Rock," from either species having at one time frequented them. We have also many tales, common alike in the highlands of Ireland and Scotland, of children being carried off by eagles, which may have been either the golden or sea eagle when pressed by hunger.

Indigenous.

Genus V.—Pandion (Osprey).

Species 13.—The Osprey.

Haliœetus pandion. Linn.
Aigle balbuzard. Temm.

This interesting species is one of great rarity in its occurrence—having only been obtained in five or six instances, two of which were at a pond near the Dublin and Kingstown Railway, in October, 1849.* Differing in a remarkable degree in its habits from all our raptorial species, the osprey,

* Thompson.

in the fullest sense of the word, is "the sea eagle;" the bird known by that title is not maritime, excepting in the haunts it frequents, being, more correctly speaking, a shore eagle, as the golden eagle is the representative of the land.

Almost similar to the gannet, in the osprey we observe the same method of obtaining food: hovering at a considerable height over the sea, with the head directed downwards, and watchful of the slightest movement of his finny prey, which, when being discerned, the wings are instantly closed, "and he descends like a perpendicular torrent into the sea, with a loud rushing sound, and with the certainty of a rifle; in a few moments he emerges, bearing in his claws his struggling prize, which he always carries head foremost, and having risen a few feet above the surface, shakes himself as a water-spaniel would do, and directs his heavy and laborious course directly for the land."*

Abundant during the summer along the coasts of North America, its presence is hailed by the fishermen with the same feelings of satisfaction as the appearance of the gannet upon our own shores.

> "True to the season, o'er our sea-beat shore
> The sailing osprey high is seen to soar,
> With broad unmoving wing, and, circling slow,
> Marks each loose straggler in the deep below,—
> Sweeps down like lightning! plunges with a roar!
> And bears his struggling victim to the shore."

The most certain of all indices, the appearance of the osprey is awaited with the utmost anxiety by the fishermen of those coasts ere they commence the toil and labours of their season. Protected by them as the other harbingers of summer are upon the land, to molest one in the vicinity of a fleet of fishermen might be attended with unpleasant consequences. As an instance of the feelings with which they hail its appearance, we give insertion to the following lines by Wilson, the ornithologist of America, entitled "The Fisherman's Hymn:"

> "The osprey sails above the sound;
> The geese are gone; the gulls are flying;
> The herring shoals swarm thick around;
> The nets are launched; the boats are plying.
> Yo, ho, my hearts! let's seek the deep,
> Raise high the song, and cheerly wish her,
> Still as the bending net we sweep,
> 'God bless the fish-hawk and the fisher!'

* Wilson.

" She brings us fish; she brings us spring,
Good times, fair weather, warmth, and plenty;
Fine store of shad, trout, herring, ling,
Sheep's head and drum, and old wives' dainty.
Yo, ho, my hearts! let's seek the deep,
Ply every oar, and cheerly wish her,
Still as the bending net we sweep,
' God bless the fish-hawk and the fisher!'

" She rears her young in yonder tree,
She leaves her faithful mate to mind 'em;
Like us, for fish, she sails to sea,
And, plunging, shows us where to find 'em.
Yo, ho, my hearts! let's seek the deep,
Ply every oar, and cheerly wish her,
While the slow bending net we sweep,
' God bless the fish-hawk and the fisher!' "

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Genus VI.—Buteo (Buzzard).

Species 14.—The Common Buzzard.

Buteo vulgaris. Bechstein.
La Buze. Temm.

Kite. Goshawk.

This fine species appears chiefly confined to the north of Ireland, where it occurs in limited numbers, breeding along the basaltic precipices of the coast. The very few cases received by Mr. Glennon for preservation have been forwarded from the northern counties invariably.

Of large size, and characterized by habits the most inactive of the family, the buzzard possesses little of that energy and determination so remarkable in the preceding birds. Incapable, from the broad, rounded shape of the wings, of performing the same rapid flight as the falcons, the prey is never attempted to be obtained by pursuit; but almost similar to the barn owl, we observe the light, buoyant flight of the buzzard performed at a short distance from the ground, circling several times the same spot in its search over the field or the heath of the hill side, and dropping instantly upon whatever gives evidence of life beneath; possessing little discrimination, the partridge with wings extended in the stubble field, the lizard basking upon the heath, or the frog by the margin of the water, are indifferently stooped to. Yet inactive as the buzzard may occasionally appear, during the season

of incubation its movements are extremely beautiful; ascending with a spiral flight to an immense altitude, it almost recalls to mind the appearance presented by some of the larger gulls when, in a similar manner, moving imperceptibly in the upper regions of the air. Even by the poet the tameness of its habits has been recognised:

> "The noble buzzard ever pleased me best;
> Of small renown, 'tis true, for, not to lie,
> We call him but a hawk by courtesy."

Indigenous.

Species 15.—The Rough-legged Buzzard.

Buteo lagopus. Briss.
Buse pattue. Temm.

The Rough-legged Buzzard differs but little from the common species, except in the tarsi being feathered, almost similar to the golden eagle. Of extreme rarity in its occurrence, but few specimens have been obtained in Ireland.

One adult male, purchased by Dr. Marshall in 1831, was captured near Dundonald, in the county of Down, "by being knocked upon the head with a stick when gorged. On dissection, the remains of birds, and a full-grown rat, torn into four pieces, were observed in the stomach."*

Another very fine specimen, which came under our own notice in Mr. Glennon's, was purchased by Dr. Ball for the University Museum. It was shot in Kildare, and, on dissection, the stomach was found empty. Described by Audubon as possessing even more sluggish habits than the preceding, he has observed of it: "The greatest feat I have seen them performing was scrambling at the edge of the water to secure a lethargic frog; and I have frequently put up one that seemed watching for food at the edge of a ditch, long after sunset."

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Genus VII.—Pernis (Bee Hawk).

Species 16.—The Honey Buzzard.

Pernis apivorus. Cuvier.
Buse bondrée. Temm.

Equal in rarity to the rough-legged, the honey buzzard has occurred in about the same number of instances. Of

* Thompson.

great interest to the ornithologist, from the description of food on which it occasionally preys, and from which it has received the appellation of honey buzzard, it differs from the entire raptorial family in that respect; and although we may see the kestrel prey upon insects, and find their remains in the stomach of the common buzzard, yet, in this species, we have a form where nature has employed her designs in placing a protection from the stings of those insects whose habitations it may attack. This protection we see in the close, scale-like feathers which defend the eyelids and the loral space, and which forms an impervious covering at a point so vulnerable to its winged assailants. Of what value this must be, we may instance the bird captured by Mr. Selby in Northumberland, which had torn out from under the roots of a platanus a wasp's nest, tearing the comb to pieces, "and clearing it of the wasp, grubs, and immature young, with which it had been filled." Two steel traps, baited with comb from another nest, were placed in proximity to the one destroyed; and on the next day the honey buzzard was found secured by its leg in one of the traps."* Another instance of its capture, occurring near Belfast, is recorded as having "the bill and forehead covered with cow dung in such a manner as to lead to the supposition that the bird had been searching for insects."† Another specimen, shot near Kilruddery, county of Wicklow, came into the possession of Mr. Warren. In some instances preying upon the same food as the majority of the raptores, one instance came under our own observation from a male bird, sent in May, 1849, by Captain C. Dunne, of Baronstown, to Mr. Glennon, to be preserved, and which had been observed by that gentleman to have been there for several succeeding seasons, summer and winter. Having on many occasions observed it feeding upon the bald coots which frequented the lake, he had one killed and poisoned with strychnine, as a bait for the honey buzzard; and on the next day it was found poisoned at some distance from the spot. It is now preserved in the collection at Baronstown.

Habitat—Southern Europe.

* Selby. † Thompson.

Genus VIII.—Circus (Harrier).

Species 17.—The Marsh Harrier.

Circus æruginosus. Linn.
Buzard harpaye ou de Marais. Temm.

Moor Buzzard. Kite. Brown Hawk.

The Marsh Harrier, the most abundant of our larger birds of prey, appears also to be one widely distributed in its occurrence. An inland species, it is commonly found in the vicinity of whatever marsh or bog is sufficiently large to afford it a good hunting-ground. More plentiful in some localities than in others, five and seven birds have been trapped at the same time near the lake of Ballynacargy, and on the estate of Sir W. Levinge in Westmeath. More active in its habits than the buzzard, the moor harrier may be constantly observed upon the wing in those localities where it occurs. Skimming along close to the marsh, it pounces, like the common buzzard, upon whatever small animal or bird is observed moving below. The water rat and aquatic reptiles are seized by this bird also; and occasionally even the teal and mallard are surprised and struck down, for which reason in some parts of the country they are destroyed by the gamekeepers. Differing from the great number of the raptores we have examined, we find the breeding-place selected by the harriers to be in every instance upon the ground, concealed in a tuft of herbage, or hidden in some reed-bed.

Although, perhaps, not of great interest, yet we may observe at all times the adaptation of the locality to the habits of the bird. Thus, we find the peregrine nidifying upon the maritime precipices of the coast; the sparrow-hawk upon the topmost extremity of the tree in woodland situations; whilst the family of harriers rear their young amidst the marshes, where food is at all times attainable.

Indigenous.

Species 18.—The Hen Harrier.

Circus cyaneus. Selby.
Buzard Saint Martin. Temm.

White Hawk. Ringtail. Blue Hawk.

This species appears to be of considerable rarity upon the eastern portion of the island, although it occurs in considerable numbers both north and south. Presenting an unusual appearance in the colouring of the sexes, we observe the

male of a beautiful greyish-blue colour, whilst the plumage of the female is composed of various shades of dark brown; also considerably exceeding the male bird in size; it has been distinguished as a separate species by the earlier writers on ornithology, under the appellation of the ringtail hawk. Nearly similar to the marsh harrier, this species selects the more elevated heathy sides of the mountain for its habitation; where, although smaller in size than that bird, it exhibits more determination in its habits, and is perhaps the most falconine of its family in pursuing the prey which it has started. Searching for food at a later hour than any of the hawks, the hen harrier is repeatedly observed at twilight circling and searching over the fallows as minutely as the owl; hunting in pairs, each bird selects a separate beat, traversed so correctly that, observing the birds passing a particular place, by returning at the same time on the succeeding evening, the bird is certain to occur to our observation.* In some instances, similar to the peregrine in determined daring, it has at times forfeited life by its fearless audacity. An old sportsman once mentioned to me the annoyance he had received, before the introduction of the double-barrelled gun, by birds of this species watching him when engaged snipe-shooting, and instantly, on the bird falling, seizing his prize before he could obtain it; and yet so watchful were they, that no approach was permitted until the gun had been discharged; however, after they had experienced the effect of a double-barrelled gun, the remaining birds changed their tactics, and left the snipe-shooter to himself.

Breeding amidst the heath of the Wicklow mountains, we have, on a few occasions, observed blue hawks, as they are commonly denominated, whilst skimming closely and rapidly over the heath in search of prey. One sent to Mr. Glennon for preservation was shot whilst carrying off a water-hen.

Indigenous.

Species 19.— Montagu's Harrier.

Circus cineraceus. Selby.
Buzard Montagu. Temm.

This extremely rare species has only occurred in two instances in Ireland, one of which was shot near Bray, and the other at the Scalp, county of Wicklow. The stomach of the last specimen contained the remains of frogs. Smaller and

* Fennell.

more elegant in appearance than the hen harrier, its habits have been described as similar to those of that bird. The eggs, which on one occasion I had the pleasure of seeing, when forwarded to London in a recent state from Cambridgeshire, are rather small in size, and resembled those of the preceding birds in their bluish-white colour.

Habitat—Southern Europe.

FAMILY III.—STRIGIDÆ (OWLS).

Genus IX.—Strix (Barn Owl).

Species 20.—The White or Barn Owl.

Strix flammea. Linn.
Chouette effraie. Temm.

The Barn Owl is the most common and widely distributed of all our nocturnal raptores, and appears to be equally abundant in all parts of the island. Its food in a great measure consists of small birds resting on the ground, rats, insects, and even fish; but it principally depends for existence on mice, of which it annually destroys a vast number. Were it not for the disproportionate size of the head, and shortness of the tail, the form of this bird might be called elegant. The chasteness of the plumage, and the aerial lightness of its flight, added to its benefits to the farmer, compensate for its defects, and render it one of our most useful and yet most persecuted birds. It has, however, like many others, attained an unenviable notoriety; and that from the earliest ages, being figuratively employed in Holy Writ as an emblem of desolation, and rendered an unclean bird by the Mosaic Law; the fable-loving Greeks seized eagerly on the owl; and, although they have symbolized it as an emblem of wisdom, yet the majority of their writers have instanced it as the most perfect type of wretchedness in existence.

All the poets have followed in the beaten track laid down by Ovid, and, perhaps, inferring from the Levitical law, and mythological lore, that it was a fair subject for attack, have endeavoured to outdo each other in vituperation. And as for our own degenerate days, no "deed without a name" can be enacted, without the potent assistance of the harmless owl. No witch's charm by any possibility can be efficacious, unless the "obscure bird of night" contributes its influence.

Horace's witch, Canidia, uses the plumage of the owl in her incantation, and, doubtless, Macbeth had ne'er been king, if the owlet's foot was not introduced into the bubbling cauldron; so that we see, from remote antiquity to the present time, all agree in selecting the undeserving and harmless owl as a mark on which to heap unfounded and ignorant prejudices.

Did the barn owl but pursue its nightly avocations under the broad glare of day, many prejudiced opinions respecting it would necessarily be refuted, and the farmer and agriculturist would join in offering an asylum to this much persecuted bird.

But it is otherwise, the time chosen by the great and destructive tribe of the Rodentia to continue their depredations is, when

"the knell of parting day"

leaves no disturber to prevent the damages committed by those destructive pests.

Then—

"doing her good deeds in the dark,"

—the owl silently leaves her ivied nook, and on noiseless pinions, "winnowing the air," successfully scours along the places frequented by her nimble prey.

Gliding along in silence, the open field and the hedgerow are carefully searched over, until the chief place of his operations is approached—the corn-stacks in the barn-yard. Only observed at intervals, he circles each stack so noiseless in his flight, and so quickly lost to view in the dusk of twilight, that you can scarcely credit having seen him until he has vanished.

Nor are the excursions of the barn owl confined to the country districts, as we have frequently observed it skimming in the most central parts of the city of Dublin, and remarked specimens which were shot in the Coburg Gardens and Stephen's-green. The latter place I have known the barn owl to frequent regularly every evening during summer, and on several occcasions believed it to be feeding upon the large ghost moth, which occurs there in great abundance during the season. Some years since, one of those birds selected for residence a nook in the tower of St. Patrick's Cathedral, where it might be observed at dusk preening itself in preparation for its nocturnal ramble.

An owl of this species, captured alive, and for which I was indebted to the kindness of a friend, made its exit from my

possession in the following manner. Having brought it to a drawing-room, and explained the curious manner of its flight to some friends present, a lady proposed to remove it from its cage to illustrate its peculiarity; which being done, after the owl made the circle of the room,—perhaps attracted by the draught from the firegrate,—it as noiselessly disappeared up the chimney, and took to wing when emerging at the top, not the least incommoded by the glare of daylight.

The number of old ruined castles, towers, and abbeys which everywhere rise to view, and form such a prominent feature in our isle, offer a secure retreat to this species, and afford it a concealment sufficiently remote from disturbance during the day. Indeed, the presence of the owl is inseparable from the mouldering pile of antiquity in every country,—the same dweller along the fortress-like tombs of the Roman Way, as it is amidst the ruins of the Alhambra,—its appearance has occupied the minds of each people, and obtained it a place in the traditions of every land:—

> "If thou would'st view Melrose aright,
> Go view it in the pale moonlight;
> When the distant Tweed is heard to rave,
> And the owl to hoot o'er the dead man's grave."

In Norway the flesh of the owl is eaten, and is esteemed a dainty, its excellency having even passed into a proverb, "tender as a boiled owl." The Tartars pay it divine honours, attributing the preservation of their founder, Genghis Khan, to the fact of a bird of this species settling over the place where he was hiding from his pursuers; and to a similar circumstance the preservation of Mahomet was owing.

Indigenous.

Genus X.—Otus (Eared Owl).

Species 21.—The Long-eared Owl.

Otus vulgaris. Fleming.
Hibou moyen duc. Temm.

This common species is nearly as abundant as the barn owl in its distribution; at least, judging from the numbers sent to the bird preservers, I have seen an equal number of the long-eared owl.

Of great beauty, it is the most attractive of our common nocturnal raptores; and it is only when in confinement that we have an opportunity of observing the great depth of colour in the rich orange irides of the bird.

Frequenting woods, it seeks the shelter of the upper branches in any dark situation where it can remain concealed during the day, and on the approach of evening it may be observed gliding spectral-like through the intricacies of the branches, as it emerges upon its grand feeding-ground, the meadow. There, similar to the barn owl, it preys upon small birds, mice, and insects. Resting at times upon the top of the field-gate, a shrill plaintive cry is uttered, and again it glides off, as noiseless as it came.

Rarely observed flying during the daytime, occasional instances have occurred to us where specimens were shot when apparently engaged searching the meadows for food during midday.

In confinement this owl becomes very tame and familiar, and also a most industrious mouser. A bird of this species, at one time in the possession of a friend, appeared untiring in this pursuit, and considerable amusement was always afforded when a number of mice were captured. The first thrown to him was clutched in one foot, and the second was secured by the other, whilst the third was caught in the bill. Thus laden, he hobbled away to any dark place to feed, and seemed to be at all times unwilling to depart unless he had received his full complement.

Indigenous.

Species 22.—The Short-eared Owl.

Otus brachyotus. Forster.
Hibou brachiote. Temm.

Woodcock Owl. Fern Owl.

The Short-eared Owl is a species of great interest from being the only migratory bird comprised in the entire order of the raptores. The most unusual of the common species in its occurrence, it occasionally appears about Dublin, but always in damp, marshy situations: along the wet meadows of the North Lots we have met with it, and also upon the exposed grounds in the vicinity of the Pigeon House Wall. Resting in most instances upon the ground, the majority of specimens forwarded to Mr. Glennon for preservation have been obtained by snipe-shooters, who procured them in bogs frequented by the snipe.

Occurring over the island in very limited numbers, it appears at the same time that the great influx of winter migrants arrive; departing at the same time as those birds, it is

seldom observed after April, and in no authenticated instance has it been known to remain and breed. Best known in Ireland by the appellation of woodcock owl, the name is most probably derived from its arriving at the same time as that bird, and not from preying upon it. Although instances have occurred where this species has been shot with a common snipe "in possession," yet the woodcock is too large a bird to be struck down by a mousing owl.

A bird at one time in my possession, which had been slightly wounded, employed a curious place for stowing away his provender. On the occasion of a mouse being flung to him, in most cases it was instantly caught by the bill, and held there whilst he was aware of being watched; on the head being averted, the mouse disappeared in an instant between the wing and body, and his orange irides, with the nictitating peculiarities of the owl, appeared almost as if winking at his own success. A second mouse was disposed of under the other wing, whilst a third lay neglected before him until he was left undisturbed to dispose of his hidden spoil.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Genus XI.—Bubo (Eagle Owl).

Species 23.—The Eagle Owl.

Bubo maximus. Sibbald.
Hibou grand-duc. Temm.

This fine species, remarkable for its great size and the beauty of its plumage, has in no instance been actually obtained in Ireland, our knowledge of its occurrence being limited to four birds, which were observed in Donegal after a great storm from the north, when the ground was covered with snow.

The same informant, Mr. J. V. Stewart, from whose catalogue of the birds of Donegal the above has been obtained, has also observed, "that he was informed a pair of them bred in Tory Island, about nine miles from the north of this coast, whence it is probable they came from that island."

Respecting their breeding in that locality, in such vicinity to the main land, Mr. Thompson has remarked: "It must be a mere fancy on the part of the individual who made the communication to Mr. Stewart."

One of the largest of its family, the strength of the eagle

owl is proportionate to its size, so that we might well suppose its being a dangerous enemy to hares and grouse in the countries of Northern Europe and America, where it frequents.

Like the other birds comprised in this interesting family, the superstitious ideas of various countries have firmly clung to it. Increasing their fear in proportion to its size, we express no astonishment whilst reading of the Indian medicine man, who represents the awe and reverence which should be experienced towards him by the stuffed figure of the great owl, —when we remember that Rome, on two occasions, underwent lustrations for the purpose of purifying the city after the appearance of this inauspicious bird.

Commonly observed in the United States, Wilson has given us the following anecdote respecting its habits in confinement: "A very large one, wing-broken while on some foraging excursion, was kept about the house for several days, and at length disappeared, no one knew how. Almost every day after this, hens and chickens also disappeared one by one, in an unaccountable manner, till in eight or ten days very few were left remaining. The fox, the minx, and weasel were alternately the reputed authors of this mischief, until one morning the old lady herself, rising before day to bake, in passing towards the oven, surprised her late prisoner the owl regaling himself on the body of a newly killed hen. The thief instantly made for his hole under the house, from whence the enraged matron soon dislodged him with a brush handle, and without mercy despatched him. In this snug retreat were found the greater part of the feathers, and many large fragments of her whole family of chickens."

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Genus XII.—Scops (Scops Owl).

Species 24.—The Scops-eared Owl.

Scops Aldrovandi. Will.
Hibou scops. Temm.

This beautiful little owl is one of extreme rarity, only two specimens, properly authenticated as being obtained in Ireland, having come under the notice of Mr. Thompson. Of these the first was noticed by R. Ball, Esq., of Dublin, from a specimen shot in the month of July, by the gamekeeper at Lough Crew, county of Meath, the seat of J. L. W. Naper, Esq. Another scops-eared owl was observed by Mr. J. Poole,

of Killiane, Wexford, which had been killed near Kilmore, in the south of that county.

Very common in Italy during summer, Mr. Spence, the celebrated entomologist, has noticed it during his residence in Florence, from one which established itself in the garden attached to his house, where it became remarkable in constantly uttering its cry from nightfall to midnight, at intervals between each other, as regular as the ticking of a clock.*

In France we have the authority of Buffon, who states that they arrive in flocks about the same time as the swallow, and take their departure after them.

Habitat—Southern Europe.

Genus XIII.—Syrnia (Snowy Owl).

Species 25.—The Snowy Owl.

Syrnia nyctea. Selby.
Chouette harfang. Temm.

This noble-looking bird, of which as many as eight or nine instances have been recorded as having occurred in Ireland, is the most magnificent in its appearance of the family to which it belongs.

Extremely powerful and muscular in its conformation, it differs from the strigidæ in many particulars. Bold and determined in its habits, the prey is indifferently captured in the broad glare of day, or during the dusk of twilight. Possessing also a degree of courage not observable in other species, it gives chase to the object of pursuit upon the wing, and gains upon it by rapid sweeps of the wing, striking it somewhat in the manner of the peregrine.

At times even emulating that noble falcon in its audacity, Dr. Richardson informs us that in the northern latitudes of America it has been known to watch the grouse-shooters for a whole day for the purpose of sharing the spoil. On such occasions it perches on a high tree, and when a bird is shot, skims down and carries it off before the sportsman can get near.

The plumage of the adult is extremely beautiful, the feathers being pure white, accasionally tipped with the deepest black.

Its form is so completely enveloped with down and feathers that the bill and claws are but discernible. In this provision

* Loudon's Magazine of Natural History.

we may also recognise the admirable adaptation of nature in giving it such an adequate protection against the rigors of the northern latitudes, which it frequents.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

ORDER II.—INCESSORES (PERCHING BIRDS).

SUB-ORDER.—DENTIROSTRES (NOTCHED-BILLED BIRDS).

FAMILY IV.—LANIADÆ (SHRIKES).

Genus XIV.—Lanius (Shrike).

Species 26.—The Great Grey Shrike.

Lanius excubitor. Linn.
Pie-grièche grise. Temm.

Butcher Bird. Grey Shrike.

This family, represented in our island by the occasional occurrence of a single species, is one offering the greatest interest to the ornithologist. Linking, in an admirable manner, the great orders of the raptores and incessores, its affinity to one is indicated by its habits, and to the other by the general form of the species.

The present shrike, the largest in size visiting the British isles, has only occurred in our own island in about fifteen separate instances* in various localities, north and south; all of which were obtained during autumn.

Resembling the other species comprised in this family in habits, the food of the great grey shrike consists of small birds, mice, and insects, which, when killed, are impaled, or otherwise fastened, upon a thorn, and rent into pieces by this handsome little tyrant.

Occasionally, like the flycatcher, it selects a prominent position upon the outer branches of the hedgerow, whence it sallies into the air in pursuit of its insect prey. As noted in Mr. Thompson's work upon the Irish Fauna, we had the pleasure of observing a bird of this species at Montpelier, one

* Thompson.

of the Dublin mountains, but from its excessive wariness in admitting approach, we were unable to obtain it, although we fired twice unsuccessfully. Its flight was strong and buoyant, and apparently resembled that of a wagtail in its wavering character.

Habitat—Western Europe.

FAMILY V.—MYOTHERINÆ (ANTCATCHERS).

Genus XV.—Cinclus (Dipper).

Species 27.—The Water Ousel.

Cinclus aquaticus. Bechstein.
Cincle plongeur. Temm.

Kingfisher. Dipper. Water Blackbird. River Pye.

The Water Ousel, although a local species, is commonly found in all suitable localities over the island, and perhaps in few situations in the same abundance as along the Dodder river, some nine miles from the city.

Possessed of very singular habits, the most curious of which is its power of progressing for a short distance along the bottom of the stream or river,—a habit we have many times observed when watching them by the margin of the streams flowing from the Dublin and Wicklow mountains.

Perching upon some water-worn stone, it at once attracts attention by its compact appearance and the snowy whiteness of the breast; introducing itself to our notice by a peculiar ducking and jerking of the body, we see it suddenly glide from its perch and disappear under the water opposed to the current; in a moment after, we observe it at some distance above, again perched, ducking and bowing as if rendering thanks for having received our observation during the performance. A fact which occurred to our own notice may not be devoid of interest, illustrating, as it does, the admirable provision which nature has provided to enable the plumage of this species to resist the water so effectually.

Having, at one time, obtained specimens of the common blackbird and water ousel, for the purpose of investigating some anatomical differences, by some oversight both were forgotten, and rendered useless for the purpose. Upon both birds being plucked, a curious difference was exhibited—for, whilst the blackbird was devoid of a single plumelet, the entire body

of the water ousel was covered with a thick soft down, which was, doubtless, intended to form the impervious covering which enables it at all times to enter the water and search for food beneath its surface.

Indigenous.

FAMILY VI.—MERULINÆ (THRUSHES).

Genus XVI.—Oriolus (Oriole).

Species 28.—The Golden Oriole.

Oriolus galbula. Lin.
Loriot. Temm.

This elegantly marked species, with its bright hues of golden yellow and deep black, is, as we might suppose, too beautiful to be a native of our ungenial clime. Of great rarity, we can only give it a place in our Fauna from the occurrence of six or eight specimens, in various parts of Ireland. Closely resembling the thrushes, it has received the appellation of golden thrush from several authors who have described it, and who have also agreed in describing its habits as similar to those of the true merulinæ.

In the summer of 1851 we had the pleasure of examining, in a fresh state, a very beautiful male, in the establishment of Mr. Lefèvre,* who kindly informed us of its having been trapped in the vicinity of St. Cloud, some few miles from Paris.

Habitat—Southern Europe.

Genus XVII.—Turdus (Thrush).

Species 29.—The Missel Thrush.

Turdus viscivorous. Linn.
Merle draine. Temm.

Jay. Big Felt. Missel Bird. Storm Cock.

The largest of the thrushes. This species is a general resident with us; but during spring and summer, from its habit of breeding in the upper branches of lofty trees, it appears of greater rarity than it really is. Found in pairs during the breeding season, and on the approach of winter forming

* Naturaliste, Quai Malaquais, Paris.

into large flocks, the great numbers of which occasionally induces us to believe that large accessions are received at that season from more northern latitudes. Depending principally for existence upon the berries of the hawthorn, during winter we may frequently observe thirty or forty missel thrushes amongst the boughs, accompanied with redwings; the missel thrushes expressing satisfaction at intervals, by uttering their hoarse, grakle-like call-note.

Few localities are more frequented than the old hawthorn woods in the Phœnix Park, where they congregate in great numbers from the "watch and ward" extended to them by the keepers.

Exceeding in size our European song-birds, the song of the missel thrush is very beautiful; and although it may not equal the deep mellowness of the blackbird, or the more varied notes of the thrush, yet it is one of the wildest in its character, and at the same time softest in its modulation of the various songs for which the entire family is remarkable.

Well known for the habit of singing immediately preceding a storm or high wind, it has obtained, in some parts of the country, the appellation "storm cock." But even beautiful as is the song then, it is far exceeded by the combined melody of a flock, perhaps consisting of eighty or a hundred birds, all singing in harmonious unison, as if murmuring some low, sweet melody, which comes more acceptable to us at a season when snow and frost hold every thing confined.

Timid in disposition, during the season of incubation it becomes courageous and determined in defence of its young, and scruples not to attack any marauding magpie suspected to possess sinister designs upon its progeny.

Indigenous.

Species 30. The Redwing.

Turdus iliacus. Linn.
Merle mauvis. Temm.
Swinepipe. Felt.

The Redwing might be mistaken for the song thrush, to which it bears a considerable resemblance, were it not for a broad white streak over the eye, by which it may be at once distinguished. Occurring with us in very considerable numbers during winter, on the approach of spring, they again betake themselves to their native wilds in Norway. Similar in habits to the missel thrush, with which they associate in flocks, the redwing, perhaps, of the two species, ex-

hibits more timidity; and as it has never remained in any authenticated instance, for the purpose of nidification, we have no opportunity of hearing that exquisite melody which has obtained for it the proud appellation—the "nightingale of Norway."

Whether its melody was admired by the ancients we know not; but it is certain, its flesh was held in great estimation. As we are told, the Romans kept great numbers in aviaries, feeding them upon bruised figs and flour to improve their flavour, and consequently sold at a high price, their average value being about three denarii, or two shillings sterling each.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Species 31.—The Fieldfare.

Turdus pilaris. Linn.
Merle litorne. Temm.

Blue felt. Big felt. Feltyfare.

This beautifully plumaged species, like the redwing, is only a winter visitant to our shores, and occurs in smaller numbers than any of our migratory thrushes. On their arrival, generally in October, they form into large flocks, and, apparently more wary than either the redwing or missel thrush, give the preference to the open field, where they are usually seen feeding and resting, adopting, for preservation's sake, the motto,—"A fair field and no favour,"—with the reverse of which—"A field fare and no favour"—they seem to be equally well acquainted, as they are most difficult of approach; so much so, that sentinels are placed on any lofty trees in the vicinity to give instant tidings of the approach of their enemy, man.

The most watchful of the thrushes, it is also the most silent, as, with the exception of occasional bickerings whilst feeding, it remains in silence, and this fact doubtless drew Woodsworth's attention when he remarked:—

"The fieldfare's pensive flock."

From observing, in the month of June, an adult female which had been shot on the island of Lambay by A. Carmichael, Esq., we conclude the species may in some rare instances remain and breed.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Species 32.—The Song Thrush.

Turdus musicus. Linn.
Merle grive. Temm.

Throstle. Mavis.

The common thrush is the most generally distributed of all our song birds, few localities in our island being totally destitute of them. It is apparently esteemed a favourite with the community, doubtless from its harmless habits and melodious voice. Its food consists of insects, worms, snails, larvæ, and berries of various kinds, and when in the vicinity of the shore it finds sustenance in the smaller shell-fish. When searching for food, the thrush hops slowly along the ground, and when an earthworm is observed, in a like manner with the lapwing, it leaps in the vicinity, to startle and induce the worm to emerge from its refuge, when it is instantly seized, broken up, and swallowed.

The song of the thrush is the first to herald the bright and vernal footsteps of the spring; and even in winter, when the earth is covered with snow and ice, its inspiriting notes awake the melody of the silent songsters.

The thrush breeds early, and has generally two broods in the season. The first seldom comes to maturity on account of the exposed and easily attained situation in which the nests are built; rarely escaping the prying eye of the village schoolboy, her beautifully marked eggs forming a temptation difficult to be resisted.

The nest, generally placed in a holly tree, or other thick bush, is at a small height from the ground, strongly and firmly constructed, externally of roots, twigs, and mosses, firmly interwoven; and internally, thickly plastered with mixed clay and cow-dung; the eggs are generally five, and are of a bright green colour, dotted with numerous small black spots.

The familiar name by which the thrush is known in the country is the "throstle," and by the poets, the "mavis,"—

> "Take thy delight in yonder goodly tree,
> Where the sweet merle and warbling mavis be."

The thrush is found in the most sterile and barren parts of our island, differing from the blackbird, which is seldom found at a distance from cultivation. To those who object not to its loud and shrill melody, as a cage-bird this species is unexceptionable, and when kept clean becomes a pleasing songster and an agreeable pet. When an unbroken snail is placed

in its cage, it is amusing to witness its efforts to break it, the snail-shell being held by the bill, and struck repeatedly on the nearest hard substance, in most cases to the detriment of sundry earthen vessels. This species, when pursued by raptorial birds, familiarly seeks a refuge in the habitations of man.

Poets may eulogize, and dwell with rapture on the love-sick strains of the "Bulbul of eastern tales," as, perching on her favourite thorn, she pours to "Night's dull ear" her matchless melody, subduing the ardent imagery of the voluptuous and effeminate oriental; travellers may extol the magnificent and wondrous melody of the "Mocking-bird of the far West," when, from some primeval pine of her native wilds, she momentarily gladdens the proud yet bursting heart of the stoical wanderer of the prairie, when sadly and finally regarding the furrowed and whitened relics of his fathers, ere he takes for his last route the direction of the setting sun: but—equally privileged as the denizens of those climes—go to our lonely wilds of the west, where the grey mists hang over the heath-clad hills—where the blackened crags frown in eternal defiance over the foaming Atlantic—where stand our mystical round towers, whose origin is wrapped in the mists of ages,—and there listen with attuned thought to the wild and varied melody of the thrush, as, poured from the summit of some lichened rock, it is wafted by the perfumed breeze to the attent ear, allaying by its magic influence the empty aspirations of ambition, and diffusing over the humbled soul sweet thoughts of empyreal brightness, till, forgetful of earth, the enfranchised spirit is insensibly wafted, and soars to where the speckled warbler addresses its evening hymn. And, oh! when awakening from that dream of unalloyed bliss and happiness, how the chilled and seared spirit recoils from entering again the precincts of a distrustful world! Yet all have their separate charms. An almighty and beneficent Providence has placed peculiar pleasures in every clime, to minister to our happiness, and soothe our earthly woes.

Indigenous.

Species 33.—White's Thrush.

Turdus Whitii. Eyton.
Merle à White. Temm.

Through the critical knowledge of Dr. Allman, Professor of Botany, Trinity College, Dublin, a single specimen of this species, so extremely rare in any continent, has been added to our Fauna, in the instance of one obtained in the winter of

1842, near Bandon, in the county of Cork. In the Fauna of that county the gentleman at whose place it was obtained, saw what he believed to be another of the same species there, but when is not mentioned.* Of such excessive rarity is this species over the European and Asiatic continents, that only in the island of Java it occurs in any numbers.†

Habitat—Asia.

Species 34.—The Blackbird.

Turdus merula. Linn.
Merle noir. Temm.

Merle.

Of the many birds rendered remarkable for their melody, this species stands pre-eminent, and being very widely distributed, has become a universal favourite with all classes.

The blackbird frequents the vicinity of gardens, shrubberies, low brushwood, and, indeed, any locality affording good cover and secure shelter. However, the blackbird, although as widely distributed as the thrush, appears not so common. Its retired and shy habits, and unwillingness to perch aloft, make it appear more scarce than it really is. In like manner with the thrush, its food consists of snails, slugs, worms, and berries; and in the spring it is an unwelcome visitor to the orchard. However, its extreme fondness for fruit is amply recompensed by its delightful song, and its services in destroying many pests of the gardener. Rambling on a country road, or in a shrubbery, we seldom fail to become acquainted with the blackbird by its giving instant notice of our approach in a singularly loud and startling alarm-cry, which, when heard for the first time in an unfrequented locality, we believe few persons do not show evident symptoms of disquietude, and it has generally happened that the blackbird's terror becomes transferred to the unconscious intruder.

This species is frequently caged, and learns to whistle the first notes of tunes, which generally is the amount of its ability. Remarkable, when wild, for its shy habits, when caged it loses its natural timidity, and becomes a bold and forward pet, unlike the song thrush, which, when wild, is a bird of bold habits, but when caged generally shy and timid.

In a recent work on Natural History the author has remarked of the blackbird,—"that its flesh is most singularly unpalatable, and even refused by tame hawks." We have

* Thompson. † Temminck.

tasted it, and found it equal to any of the thrushes. Perhaps the writer argued from the mythic belief of the Sonnah:—"That the souls of those in Purgatory were in the crops of blackbirds, exposed to hell fire morning and evening, until the Judgment Day." As for tame hawks refusing them for food, they may, but wild hawks seem to think them a singular relish.

This species, like the thrush, pairs early, and generally has two broods during the season. The nest is a large bulky structure, composed of grasses and twigs, and lined inside with mud, and is usually placed in a hawthorn or holly bush, and as often amongst long grass by the ditch side; the eggs average from four to six, in colour pale green, speckled with rusty brown.

The lover of nature knows few greater pleasures than, during the summer months, to listen to the blackbird's delightful melody. Generally, this is poured forth during the calm hours of early morning, and again towards sunset—for, like a good musician, conscious of his powers, he waits for silence to commence.

The mowers have departed from their fragrant toil,—a few faint rays still linger on the hay-field,—all is silent! except the occasional hum from the distant village; even wearied nature seems exhausted. Then! breaking the oppressive silence, comes the wild and varied melody of the dusky merle—a few low notes form a prelude to his strain; gradually the volume is increased, mellow and softened he pours his soul in song; an interval of silence, and presently at the distance of a mile, like an echo of the former, a rival blackbird takes up the strain. There comes no interruption; and the combined chorus of many now swell the sweet strain:—in eager haste they pour forth a flood of melody, and, with the fading reflections of the departing sun, their united melody

"Comes like a hymn from heaven along,"

singing, as it were, a requiem for the passing day. Well might our own Ossian have sung:—"It was pleasant to hear the blackbird singing sweetly on the top of the thorn." Or in the Glossary of Cormac:

"Sweet the warbling of the blackbird
About the lonely Rath of Fiach."

So much was thought of the melody of the woods by the

so-called "wilde and savage Irishe," that we find the bard Benean commands the kings of Ulster, A. D. 400,—

> "To listen to the birds of the valley
> Of Lough Saillach (Swilly),—the noble melodies."

In the will of Cathair Mor, one of his sons is mentioned in a manner difficult to understand:

> "Criomthan, my boyish hero,
> He is like a lock on the blackbirds of the meadow."*

Among the many relics of antiquity of the Seven Churches was the figure of a man having a bird on his outstretched hand. Nothing was known respecting it until the following story was extracted from a dubious tradition: "St. Kevin once, whilst praying in a supplicating posture with one hand outstretched, a blackbird descended and dropped her eggs in the palm; the saint, being compassionate about the bird, never removed his hand until the eggs were hatched!" It must be admitted, nothing can exceed that, not even the miracle of Moses at Raphidim.

Impelled by the truth and beauty of a passage, from the original Irish, of an admired melody, "The Coolin," translated by Hardiman, we are induced to give it.

Alas! "*tempora mutantur*," how can the present equal the past with the following lines before us:

> "Oh, sweeter is her mouth's soft music
> Than the lark or thrush at dawn,
> Or the blackbird on the green bough singing
> Farewell to the setting sun."

That the early Greeks were acquainted with the blackbird is, doubtless, correct, as many of their admired authors have remarked it; among them Theocritus—

> "When vernal blackbirds through the sprays
> Shook their shrill notes a thousand ways."

Pleasurable as the blackbird's song is, it is not unattended with use, as it is believed when "the mellow blackbird's note is shrill," to be a sure prognostic of rain.

Subject to variation, the plumage of the

> "Ousel cock, so black of hue,
> With orange tawny bill,"

is not at all times like that the poet described. So that the

* Leabhar na g-Ceart, The Book of Rights.

occurrence of cream-coloured and white-marked varieties are nothing unusual,—although we have the testimony of Pliny in recording specimens exhibited at Rome, under the appellation of "white blackbirds."

Indigenous.

Species 35.—The Ring Ousel.

Turdus torquatus. Linn.
Merle à plastron. Temm.

Cowboy. Mountain Stare. Whistler.

This distinctive and handsomely marked species occurs in smaller numbers than any of our other migratory thrushes, and differs from them in being a summer visitant to our shores, which it frequents for the purposes of nidification. Possessing the same elongated and elegant form which distinguishes the blackbird, we might name the ring ousel the white-breasted blackbird.

Frequenting localities where it is seldom disturbed on account of the solitude which it delights in, we only find the ring ousel occupying the more extended mountain ranges of our island. Distributed in limited numbers in those localities, it is a species but little known; and when occurring during autumn in the cultivated districts which it then frequents on its homeward passage, it is generally procured for its strange appearance. However, the ring ousel is a well-known species to those persons whose pleasure or occupation leads them to the mountains during summer. Perched on some elevated crag, he utters his loud, deep song, which, although composed of few notes, has a pleasing, and generally a melancholy, tendency. Occasionally, after singing, he utters that loud, clear whistle which has obtained him the complimentary appellation of "cowboy" and "whistler," by which names it is well known upon the Wicklow mountains.

During September the ring ousel is often observed at Howth and Lambay, but rarely on the main shore. Sometimes we observe the adults and young together, the pure white gorget of the old male looking beautifully conspicuous. Rarely molested in its retired breeding haunts, we had, on one occasion, the pleasure of discovering in the heath, near a river side, on the Dublin mountains, a nest containing four eggs.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Species 36.—The Gold-vented Thrush.

Turdus aurigaster. Viellot.
Turdus chrysorhœus. Temm.

Of great rarity in its occurrence, this beautiful species claims a place in our Fauna from a specimen in the possession of Dr. Burkitt, of Waterford: "It was purchased by that gentleman from a country lad who brought it into Waterford, in 1838, with a number of blackbirds (*Turdus merula*) and snipes, and who believed it to be a hen blackbird; he shot it at Mount Beresford, three miles and a half from Waterford."* The unusual interest attached to this specimen may at once be understood, from its being the only bird of the kind ever obtained in Europe. Even in its own country we are ignorant of its habits and history.

Habitat—Western Africa.

FAMILY VII.—SAXICOLINÆ (STONECHATS).

Genus XVIII.—Erithacus (Redbreasts).

Species 37.—The Common Redbreast.

Erithacus rubecula. Linn.
Bec fin rouge-gorge. Temm.

This privileged, pert, and lively little fellow is a general favourite with all; and of nearly a hundred perching birds occurring in Ireland, it is the only species which places unbounded confidence in man. True it is, that the swallow and martin exhibit a decided preference for the neighbourhood of civilization, and are found to nidify in the immediate vicinity of man, yet they are as fearful of his presence as the most solitary and timid of our native birds. The boldness of the redbreast may be at once traced to the fact of its never being molested, and its fearless familiarity seldom taken advantage of; as, "confiding in his ruddy breast,"

> "Half afraid at first,
> Against the window beats, then brisk alights
> On the warm hearth, then, hopping on the floor,
> Eyes all the smiling family askance,
> And pecks, and starts, and wonders where he is,
> Till, more familiar grown, the table crumbs
> Attract his slender feet."

* Thompson.

Even to the reckless scapegrace who indulges in practical ornithology by causing sundry unfledged sparrows to perform extraordinary aerial feats, "nolens volens," or collecting an amazing number of small eggs to perform tricks with them which far outdo the egg problem of Columbus,—even to this outlaw to all good feelings, the nest of the redbreast is sacred; his hands would no more despoil it than would the Hollander the nest of his favourite stork, or the Egyptian the chickens of Pharoah.* Wild and untutored, ask him his reasons for allowing it to remain in safety, and in many parts of Ireland you are simply answered:

> "The robin and the wren
> Are God's two holy men."

Right was the quaint poet who wrote—

> "Sacred is the household bird
> That wears the scarlet stomacher."

So many anecdotes are recorded of the tameness of this bird, that it would require a reasonable volume to recount them. But as perfection is unattainable among the human race, so it is with the robin—he has equally his vices as his virtues. His determined pugnacity, and love of tyranny over birds even larger than himself, have been remarked by all its observers. We are even told by an old Latin proverb, "Two robins feed not on the same tree together." Indeed, we can scarcely think that the same bird who pleads before us for a crumb, with its mild humid eye beaming with meekness, should, on the appearance of a rival, attack it with all the intensity of hatred possible for any bird to assume, and oftentimes to carry its struggles for superiority so far, that the lives of either or both are forfeited. A very common species, it is abundantly distributed in all parts of our island, and principally so in the immediate vicinity of man. Its food consists of earthworms and insects during summer, and crumbs of bread and refuse of all kinds are appropriated in winter. The nest is of neat structure, and is placed under a bush, or against a bank; the eggs average four to five, reddish white, speckled with light brown.

* The numbers of Egyptian vultures (*Neophron percnopterus*) who perform the duties of scavengers in all the cities of the East, unmolested by the inhabitants, are called "chickens of Pharoah" in Egypt and Turkey.

The delightful melody of this "last lone songster of the fading year" possesses another claim to our notice.

Singing in all seasons, it is one of the first to commence its matin song, and at intervals continuing during the day, it again prolongs it into midnight. But it is only when "sweet sounds are rare"—when the warm days of summer have passed, and the falling foliage of autumn leaves the branches bare and leafless, that we hear the strange, plaintive song of the redbreast, which, from its depth of sorrow, appears to bewail the approaching desolation. So sad its song, that in Germany, it is stated, prisoners have died from grief within their dungeons from hearing the thrilling sensations of loneliness conveyed in the song of the redbreast.

Its song also appeals to our feelings, partly superstitiously, partly religiously, as we have never seen the graveyard—no matter how retired, or how long disused—but we find the same mourner always there, as if singing a requiem for the departed dead.

When visiting the ruins of Monasterboice some years since, a feeling of unutterable sadness, occasioned by the song of a pair of redbreasts, pervaded our entire party.

Yet, melancholy as its song is, it does not soften the hearts of the Italian bird-venders, as Mr. Waterton remarks in his agreeable work:—"Having seen fifty redbreasts exposed for sale near the Rotundo at Rome, 'Is it possible,' said I, 'that you can kill and eat these pretty songsters?' 'Ay,' replied the fellow, with a grin, 'and if you take a dozen of them home for your dinner to-day, you will come back for two dozen to-morrow.'"

Indigenous.

Genus XIX.—Saxicola (Stonechat).

Species 38.—The Wheatear.

Saxicola œnanthe. Linn.
Traquet moteux. Temm.

Stonechat.

This lively and interesting summer visitant is one of those birds which uniformly attract our attention by their cleanly disposed plumage, and activity and gracefulness of their movements. Usually arriving about April, it takes its departure towards the end of August; and during its sojourn with us, it is found scattered in pairs along the sea-shore,

in the vicinity of sandhills, and also frequenting the slopes and pastures of our mountain ranges.

Attractive in habits, we have often felt grateful to the wheatear for its company on our shore rambles. Watchful and suspicious in its manner, a single bird will often accompany the fancied intruder for half a mile, flying on before him, then dropping on a stone; the tail is jerked up, the body bent, and the wings assuming a depressed position, it utters its impatient "check, check;" from the sound of which note it is best known as the stonechat; or in the Irish districts of the island, on the authority of Mr. Thompson, as "custeen fayclough," meaning, "the cunning little old man under the stone;" and in other localities as "casur clock," which signifies the "stonehammer." All of these names are aptly adapted to the bird, as well from its wildness and timidity as from its call-note, which bears an exact resemblance to the striking together of two stones. The song of the wheatear is wild and varied, but is seldom heard, from the timidity of its habits. We have many times observed the male hovering like a pipet over the nest of its mate, singing whilst on the wing its wildly modulated melody.

The breeding places selected by the wheatear vary according to situation; the preference is generally given to holes and chinks in embankments and stone walls. However, along the eastern side of Lambay, where they breed in considerable numbers, we have taken the eggs from the holes of the rabbit-burrows.

Habitat—Southern Europe.

Species 39.—The Stonechat.

Saxicola rubicola. Linn.
Traquet rubicole. Temm.

Blackcap.

The Stonechat, although a resident, appears of such rarity during the winter months, that we are inclined to believe they receive accessions to their numbers at the same time that the other members of the family arrive upon our shores. Although its short, bulky, little figure presents very slight claims to the elegant in nature, yet the stonechat is possessed of many pleasing habits interesting to the ornithologist.

Nearly similar in habits to the wheatear, it is, however, seldom found in the same situation, but generally on commons or waste land, or, indeed, any locality where its favourite cover, the furze or gorse, exists. There, on its topmost twig, we can always observe the stonechat, its deep black head and

reddish breast contrasting with the golden glories of the broom, in a manner which at once displays its beauish pretensions.

Restless and active as are all this family, perhaps the stonechat is the most so. Indolence cannot be laid to his charge, as he is ever flitting from bush to bush, uttering his monotonous clicking—

> "Where scarce the foxglove peeps, or thistles beard,
> The restless stonechat all day long is heard."

Thus Wordsworth, describing the stonechats of Cumberland, has described our own. Occasionally, during the breeding season, we hear the short and hurried song of the stonechat, uttered when hovering over the bush where the female is incubating.

Indigenous.

Species 40.—The Whinchat.

Saxicola rubetra. Linn.
Traquet tarier. Temm.

Stonechat. Furzechatter.

The Whinchat resembles the wheatear in being a summer visitant to our shores, and occurs in much more limited numbers than either of the preceding species.

To a casual observer it is almost similar to the stonechat in its marking; but it may at once be distinguished by the white streak over the eye. Resembling that bird also in its choice of situation, it resembles the wheatear in many of its habits. Like that species, the whinchat possesses the habit of preceding any intruder on its territory, flitting in a like manner from twig to twig; and with the same impatient jerking of the tail, and repeated "u-teek, u-teek," it endeavours to decoy you from its nest. During the season of incubation the whinchat is observed constantly hovering over the bush where the female is brooding, and beguiles her care with its cheerful and hurried song. Occasionally singing when perched on a twig, it will spring hurriedly into the air, and, flitting over the bush, sing in a furious manner, or, as a countryman once observed of it, "Like a trooper."

Among the most amusing of its habits are its sallies into the air after whatever insects may happen to pass close by it; in all of which endeavours it is usually successful. Very little difference is exhibited between its eggs and those of the stonechat, those of the latter being more spotted at the end.

Habitat—Southern Europe.

Genus XX.—Ruticilla (Redstart).

Species 41.—The Common Redstart.

Ruticilla phœnicurus. Linn.
Bec fin de murailles. Temm.

This elegantly formed species is one of extreme rarity in its occurrence, and has only been obtained in three or four instances in different localities on the island.

Interesting in habits, and beautiful in plumage, it is a matter of regret that it is not a companion with the many other summer visitants to our shores.

Exhibiting a peculiarity in the horizontal motion of the tail, many of its observers have disagreed in describing that motion, whether it be horizontal or vertical. Its song is described as being remarkably low, sweet, and mellow, and uttered when perching on the projecting twig of some low bush. When in confinement it is docile, and is occasionally taught to whistle. One in the possession of Mr. Sweet went through the Copenhagen waltz with admirable precision, "only that it would sometimes stop in the middle of it and say, 'chipput,' a name by which it was generally called, and which it would always repeat every time I entered the room where it was, either by night or day." The nest is a large clumsy structure, and the eggs average four or six, fine bluish-green.

Habitat—Southern Europe.

Species 42.—The Black Redstart.

Ruticilla tithys. Linn.
Bec fin rouge-queue. Temm.

The Black Redstart possesses the same qualifications of beauty, form, and plumage, which so much distinguish the last species. Like it, also, it is of great rarity in occurrence, having only been obtained in a few instances. Its habits, song, and eggs, resemble those of the common redstart.

Habitat—Southern Europe.

FAMILY VIII.—SYLVIADÆ (WARBLERS).

Genus XXI.—Curruca (Warbler).

Species 43.—The Blackcap.

Curruca atracapilla. Jardine.
Bec fin à tête noire. Temm.

This beautiful songster, whose melody is so delightful as to have gained for it the distinctive appellation of the mock nightingale, we but seldom hear in our island, from the rarity of its occurrence. Possessing the same slight slimness of figure that is so much observed in the family of the Sylviadæ, the blackcap is the most decided in its marking of all those species. Occasionally observed, on two occasions we had the pleasure of hearing the song of the blackcap in its wild state, once in the vicinity of Glasnevin, and the other at Avoca, in the county of Wicklow. A male specimen in our own collection was shot by Dr. Gilgeous at Donnybrook, near Dublin, in October, 1846. As the nightingale has left our island unvisited to the present, we must regret the rarity of its imitator:—

> "The sonorous blackcap from the ivy nook,
> Superior to the woodlark and the thrush,
> And next to Philomela, of the train
> Of warblers, pours his sweet, melodious strain."

The blackcap was well known to the ancients, and holds an honourable place in the pages of Aristotle and the elder Pliny.

Habitat—Southern Europe.

Species 44.—The Garden Warbler.

Curruca hortensis. Bechs.
Bec fin fauvette. Temm.

Not so much favoured as England in the number and occurrence of different species of the summer-seeking Sylviadæ, we can only include the garden warbler as another of those rare wanderers which occasionally appear in a few isolated instances in different parts of Ireland.

In Mr. Thompson's Fauna of Ireland we find an interesting notice, from the pen of Mr. R. Parker, of Cork,—a gentleman whose pencil has become familiarized in delineating the native birds of his own country with that perfection of touch and

tint which only a worshipper of the science could attain,—in which he remarks, that of late years the garden warbler has been a regular summer visitor to some of the rich gardens in the vicinity of Cork. Resembling the nightingale in its shy and skulking habits, the garden warbler alone "prates of his whereabouts," by his beautiful mellowed intensity of song, singing as if he were wrapt up in his own melody, he allows us to approach and observe, but when ended, glances into the underwood out of sight.

Habitat—Southern Europe.

Species 45.—The Whitethroat.

Curruca cinerea. Bechs.
Bec fin grisette. Temm.

The irritable and harmonious whitethroat is one of the most widely dispersed of our summer warblers, and occurs in all parts of the country, frequenting every hedgerow which affords it shelter.

Curious and interesting in its habits, which resemble those of the family to which it belongs, the whitethroat is a shy, retired species, always skulking away on being approached, and uttering its hoarse guttural alarm-cry in displeasure at being followed. Yet, when not alarmed,

> "The sportive whitethroat, on the twig's end borne,
> Pours hymns to freedom and the rising morn."

Doubtless! For if ever a feathered exponent of freedom sung its principles, it is the whitethroat. Earnestly wild in the intensity of its song, its appearance whilst singing is no less remarkable. Perching upon the thorn, with roseate breast almost perceptible in the sun, he gushes out his hurried song, and as if in delight at the beauty of his own strain, performs the most curious gesticulations. Now, with every change of attitude possible for bird to assume, the head shakes from side to side, every feather on it and the throat widely distended. Again, he throws himself up into the air and quivers about, singing away violently as if performing some mystic dance; and then, as if wearied with his exertions, drops stone-like into the thickest of the hedgerow, uttering his loud, scolding alarm-cry. So—

> "The whitethroat's lay
> Flitting from hedgerow, spray to spray;
> Or, gently mounting through the air,
> To mark his bosom silvery fair
> Invite us."

Habitat—Northern Africa.

Genus XXII.—Sylvia (Warbler).

Species 46.—The Willow Warbler.

Sylvia trochilus. Latham.
Bec fin pouillot. Temm.
Sallypicker. Golden Wren.

Of the many migratory birds which for a short period sojourn with us, the beautifully formed willow warbler is the most abundant, frequenting almost every locality, and enlivening our plantations and woodland copses with its simple and unwearied melody. This modest little bird, both for appearance and unobtrusive habits, is regarded by all with a favourable eye; and is a frequent and useful visitant to the orchard, examining carefully the apple and pear trees when in blossom, in search of aphides, for which reason it holds a high place in the estimation of the nurseryman, who extends to him his patronage and protection in return for the unceasing services performed by his tiny assistant.

In a short period after their arrival, they commence preparing their nest, which is placed on the ground amongst loose herbage, at the root of a bush or a sloping declivity, and is of a round loose form, having a small opening near the top. The eggs average from five to seven, in form nearly oval, and of a white colour, with red and brownish spots. When disturbed, or the nest approached, the parent flies a short distance, uttering her plaintive call of distress.

Of the many qualities possessed by this interesting species, we must not omit the mellowness of its song, which, for the small size of the bird, can be heard at a considerable distance. In England and on the Continent it is highly and justly prized as a cage bird, soon becoming used to confinement, and singing melodiously in a few days after being taken. When warbling it erects the crest, swells out the throat, and vibrates the body in accordance with its notes.

The earliest of our summer visitants, the melody of this bird, heard for the first time in the season after spring has showered with a bounteous hand her blossoms o'er the grateful earth, its "unpremeditated lay," poured forth in fitful bursts of melody, comes with surprise on the ear, and forms a brilliant contrast to the few notes of those birds remaining with us during winter.

According to Herodotus, the trochilus remained in the vicinity of the crocodile, and when the animal had made his repast, the bird entered his open mouth to rid him of the parasites

abounding there. Dear, then, should be the memory of the willow warbler to the gourmand, as it indubitably was the origin of the tooth-pick.

A favourite haunt of this species appears to be the picturesque glen which extends across the further end of the Fifteen Acres in the Phœnix Park,—a sylvan scene, that would be valued more highly were it treble the distance from the city, and which gives shelter to numbers of the "feathered choir" to utter their "wood-notes wild" in security. There the snowy blossoms of the whitethorn contrast with the yellow bloom of the "golden gorse," seeming to entice the sportive bee to revel in their beauties, and woo each passing gale to bear them forth and scatter them in "golden showers." The lovely broom! bright with the associations and recollections of the warlike Plantagenets (the beautiful flower which the father of science, Linnæus, prostrated himself before, enraptured at the sight when he beheld it for the first time). Below, the "babbling brook" prattles merrily o'er the polished stones, disturbed but when the timid deer come down to drink.

Of the old glen I am an ardent admirer, and say, with Burns—

> "Their groves o' sweet myrtle let foreign lands reckon,
> Where bright beaming summers exalt the perfume;
> Far dearer to me yon lone glen o' Green Brechan,
> Wi' the burn stealing under the lang yellow broom."

Habitat—Southern Europe.

Species 47.—The Chiff-chaff.

Sylvia hippolais. Selby.
Bec fin veloce. Temm.
Sallypicker.

The least in size of those migratory warblers which add so many attractions to our summer, the diminutive chiff-chaff is one of the most favourite in the estimation of the ornithologist, and, with the exception of the sand martin, is generally first in its appearance upon our shores.

At no time attracting our sympathies more than when heard on some cheerless April morning, uttering its pleasant call-notes, as if nature had sent, as her prophet to announce the advent of summer, this little *trouvere*, who trolls his lay as merrily as when, a short time previous, a sojourner in another land.

More local in distribution than the willow-warbler, it is found also in much smaller numbers, and frequents occasionally the vicinity of lofty trees, from the utmost height of which we hear the ceaseless repetition of its short, hurried song. This song, which bears a resemblance to its name, can be heard at a great distance, as in clear calm weather it sounds distinctly at the distance of half a mile.

When captured the chiff-chaff becomes very familiar in confinement, as, according to Mr. Stuart, it will perch on the finger of the person to whom it may be accustomed, learn to drink milk from a teaspoon, and follow its favourite round the room on the wing.

Habitat—Western Europe.

Genus XXIII.—Salicaria (Sedge Birds).

Species 48.—The Sedge Warbler.

Salicaria phragmites. Selby.
Bec fin phragmite. Temm.

Irish Nightingale. Sallypicker.

This little songster, whose love for melody is so varied that, not contented with its own simple lay, it adds notes, and purloins portions of the song of whatever species may happen to interrupt it. Thus we have heard on many occasions the elegantly formed sedge warbler along the Tolka river near Dublin, where at some places they occur in such numbers as if small colonies were unanimous in selecting their summer quarters.

From its preferring any impervious shelter, where it may skulk along the bottom of the reeds without attracting observation, it is not so well known as other species, and only attracts attention by its changing polyglot melody, which is generally performed in "shadiest covert hid."

At times, when seated by the banks of that river which Swift and Stella, Steele and Sheridan, Parnell and Addison, have hallowed by their presence, and made it classical, has the song of this species brought with it the most pleasing recollections of the many legends and traditions which invest our classic Tolka.

But pardon, gentle reader, for our digression. We will observe their habits. There, by the sedges of the river side, as if melody had returned to her primal reed, we hear the peculiar shrill "churring" of the sedge warbler. Now, suspicious of our intentions, one ventures stealthily to a reed-

top, and again drops to shelter, grating its harsh alarm-note. The swallows skim past, uttering their merry twitter, and instantly, in an excess of bird indignation for its silence being trespassed upon, the sedge warbler mounts to the highest reed, and pours forth the swallow's melody, nearly as well defined as the original.

Then comes a medley as each intruder interrupts him,—the notes of the linnet and chaffinch, and the twitter of the sparrow. But now the sun glances out brightly, and the lark

> "Higher still, and higher, from the earth now springeth;
> Like a cloud of fire, the blue deep he wingeth,
> And, singing still, doth soar, and soaring, ever singeth."

But the sedge warbler is silent, and, unable to imitate perfection, the entire colony make common cause, and express their disapprobation by a succession of harsh, grating notes.

However varied the sedge warbler's powers of imitation, its own natural song is possessed of considerable merit, and from its habit of singing after dusk and during midnight, it is well known by the names of "night-singer" and "Irish nightingale."

From the impervious situation in which it nidifies, the nest is very difficult of being discovered. However, on several occasions we have obtained it, well concealed amongst sedges, along the Tolka.

Habitat—Western Europe.

Species 49.—The Grasshopper Warbler.

Salicaria locustella. Selby.
Bec fin locustelle. Temm.

This species, which is believed to be a regular summer visitant to our island, and of which some few specimens have been obtained in various localities, appears to be of excessive rarity along the eastern portion of the island, so much so that it has never passed under my own observation, or that of Mr. Richard Glennon, who has had some forty years' experience of the distribution of our native and migratory species. Shy and retired in habits, as are many of the birds comprised in this family, the grasshopper warbler is the most so. Possessing a peculiar call-note, which bears a close resemblance to the note of the mole cricket (*Grilla talpa*), it hides itself so completely from view, that an opportunity is rarely presented of observing it; never leaving the impenetrable shelter it has chosen, neither will any inducement cause it to take wing,

threading its way with the greatest rapidity along the roots and branches of the bushy jungle it inhabits.

Habitat—Southern Europe.

Genus XXIV.—Regulus (King Bird).

Species 50.—The Golden-crested Wren.

Regulus cristatus. Ray.
Roitelet ordinaire. Temm.

The goldcrest is not only the most diminutive of our native birds, but also one of the most beautiful, and worthy indeed to top that apex of which the queenly hooper might be the base, already honoured with its regal crown of rich orange, yellow, and velvetty black.

Widely distributed over our island, the goldcrest gives the preference to young plantations, woods, and shrubberies, where we observe it during all seasons, but chiefly in autumn, when, accompanied by its young brood, it makes the branches of the old pines and hawthorns melodious by its singularly low, sweet song, which sounds like an echo of some distant melody. Indeed, we are most inclined to name it the humming-bird of our cold latitudes, as the sun, glancing upon the yellowish plumage and golden crest, when flitting from pine to pine, makes it rather resemble some creation of the insect world, with its song, ceaseless humming, than the smallest and most pleasing of our warblers. The nest is usually of a penduline form, remarkably elegant in its structure, and concealed by overhanging foliage. On being discovered in a low situation, and approached, the female flits about the vicinity, uttering her weak, sibilous cry, as if, to her at least,—

> "Her eggs within the nest repose,
> Like relics in an urn."

Indigenous.

FAMILY IX.—PARINÆ (TITS).

Genus XXV.—Parus (Tit).

Species 51.—The Great Tit.

Parus major. Linn.
Mesange charbonnière. Temm.

Blackcap. Oxeye. Tomtit.

The great tit is the largest in size of the family to which it belongs, and, next to the blue tit, the most common of the Parinæ in Ireland. Frequenting woods and thickets, it resorts to the vicinity of the garden during summer, where its visits become "more free than welcome," and might well be dispensed with, were it not for the services it renders in destroying aphides. Although all the Irish titmice are more or less distinguished by their curious patchwork of colouring, the burnished steel blue of the head, pure white cheek-patches, and the yellow breast of this species, all singularly neatly arranged, give a clean-looking appearance, which, perhaps, exceeds in beauty the other members of its family.

The great tit is also, though in a very small degree, a polyglot, changing from its own loud "tee, tee," to the merry "pink, pink," of the chaffinch; or, again, catching up the prolonged "waait" of the willow wren, it essays the "if hee," "if hee," of the cole tits in the adjoining plantation. During the season of incubation the great tit repeats a peculiar grating note, closely resembling the sound produced by sharpening a saw, and which may be heard at a considerable distance.

Indigenous.

Species 52.—The Blue Tit.

Parus cæruleus. Linn.
Mesange bleue. Temm.

Stonechat. Tomtit. Bluebonnet.

This gaily-marked little fellow is a most common species, and abundantly distributed over the island. Fearless and familiar, it is generally to be found in the vicinity of cultivated districts, and, unlike the robin (a settled pensioner on our bounty), this wandering Bedouin settles down on whatever oasis appears first in view, and becomes at once perfectly at

home. As among raptorial birds we observe the little merlin possessed of more spirit and courage than the large and more powerful eagles, in like manner, among the perching birds, we find the blue tit to be one of those possessed of such indomitable courage as at once to give it victory over its grosser antagonists.

It is during winter that we have the best opportunities for observing most of the species comprised in the family of Parinæ; although to be seen in gardens, orchards, and plantations during all seasons, yet when deprived of their usual food by the rigours of winter, they are forced for sustenance to our immediate vicinity. Thus we see the present species pick up a living in the centre of large cities, or in the country, boldly disputing with the poultry of the farmyard for the possession of a tit-bit.

Its food consists of insects, larvæ, and seeds, but when in the neighbourhood of the farm it becomes adapted to circumstances, and even lowers its woodland taste so far as to relish the good things of civilized life. Indeed, we have at times surprised it picking a bone, and it appeared more glad than otherwise, as if affording us an idea in what artistic manner such things are executed by a coxcombical "blue stocking."

Such preference does it exhibit for this fare, that the celebrated Gilbert White, during his youth, remembers catching twenty in a morning in snap mouse-traps baited with suet. During spring the great portion of its sustenance is obtained by destroying aphides and other insects, which exist in the buds, principally of the apple-tree. For these services the harmless bluebonnet is badly repaid. The gardener becomes furious at seeing his blossoms destroyed, and at once writes to some Farmers' Gazette about the best means of destroying tomtits—alas! for natural history. The editor humours his correspondent, and at once suggests a method short, sharp, and decisive, to exterminate these troublesome little vermin. Again, it is arraigned for cruelty, acts of piracy, &c. &c., and accused of killing small birds by splitting their skulls! And horrible—ye bee-keepers—"Bluebonnet" stands sentry at the entrance of your apiary, and destroys the contents of whole hives!

Certainly, we confess our total ignorance of any of those heinous charges, and believe the locality must be barren and desolate indeed not to afford a profusion of other food without deranging the contents of their stomachs by a meal of birds and bees.

The nest is generally placed in a chink, or hole in a wall or

tree, which habit in this country has procured for it the name of stonechat. It is composed of moss, wool, and hair, lined with every available feather. The eggs average from eight to twelve, in one instance eighteen were obtained in a single nest.* They are transparent reddish white, dotted with light brown.

So strong is the attachment of this bird to its eggs or young, that when sought for, it prefers remaining on the nest rather than escape. In many instances we have thus captured the female when striving to defend her young, pecking determinedly at the hand, and uttering her sibilous notes. She offers her own life to save her progeny. So extraordinary are the sites often chosen by this species to nidify, that they are frequently noticed in the public prints. One instance came under the notice of a friend of the author as follows :—

"A plaster cast of Milton, exposed in a garden, had its eye destroyed by the arrow of a mischievous urchin, which, when the classic interior became exposed, was at once selected by a pair of these birds, and where they succeeded for many years in rearing their broods in safety. Never was greater indignity offered to the poet than the present; his solemn bust profaned by these noisy vagrants."

So volatile are the attitudes of this bird, that we never for a moment observed it stationary, and when a number are observed concentrated on one tree searching for food, their appearance is delightful in the extreme ; every change of attitude possible for bird to make is at once effected by this comical little droll, all constantly enlivened by a note the very soul of merriment. Even the usually sedate Wordsworth appears infected with the joyous spirit of—

> "That giddy sprite,
> Bluecap, who, with his colours bright,
> Hung-head, pointing towards the ground—
> Fluttered, perched, into a round
> Bound himself and then unbound ;
> Lithest, gaudiest harlequin !
> Prettiest tumbler ever seen !"

Indigenous.

* Hewitson.

Species 53.—The Cole Tit.

Parus ater. Linn.
Mesange petite charbonnière. Temm.
Tomtit.

This lively little species, which resembles the blue tit in size, and the great tit in general form of colouring, is well distributed over the island, but occurs in much smaller numbers than either of the other species. One locality, where, from the presence of old hawthorn, a constant variety of this family may be observed, is the fine old woods in the Phœnix Park, where, during all seasons, an endless opportunity is afforded for examining the interesting habits of the animated and merry little titmice. In habits like the blue tit, it frequents more the plantation and shrubbery, and seldom ventures to the vicinity of the farmyard, unless forced by the severity of winter. Very social in its relations with its own species, it is no less so with others, as we frequently observe them adding to the numbers of a flock composed of the blue and long-tail tit, goldcrest, and, perhaps, the creeper.

Indigenous.

Species 54.—The Marsh Tit.

Parus palustris. Linn.
Mesange nonnette. Temm.

This titmouse, which closely resembles the preceding in size and form of colouring, is a species of great rarity in our island, as *few* specimens have passed under the observation of the late William Thompson, Esq., of Belfast. To our own observation it has never occurred in a recent state; although, on referring to notes made on some species of our birds, rare in Ireland, but common in England, we find recorded the fact of observing it, during the summer of 1848, when visiting the admirable collection of Charles Waterton, Esq., of Walton Hall, in Yorkshire, at which locality they appeared so abundant as to usurp the place of the cole tit (*Parus ater*).

The bearded titmouse (*Parus biarmicus*) is said to have occurred on one occasion, but is not sufficiently authenticated to have a place in our Fauna.

Indigenous.

Species 55.—The Long-tailed Tit.

Parus caudatus. Linn.
Mesange à long queue. Temm.

This beautiful species, as remarkable for elegance of form as from its interesting habits, has been at all times taken under the especial care of the ornithologist. Rather unusual in its occurrence, it is found in much smaller numbers than any of the species already described, perhaps owing to its wandering and migratory habits, seldom remaining for any length of time in the same locality. The admirable grace with which a troop of these birds traverse the greenwood, and the varied attitudes they display when in search of food, are eminently interesting to the observer.

Possessing a peculiarity in flight, from the great length of tail to which this species owes its name, its appearance on the wing has been likened by many writers to the rapid glancing of a feather-tipped arrow through the uncertain light of the leaf-clad grove.

The nest is a very beautiful structure, and resembles that of the goldcrest in its penduline form, as also that of the goldfinch, in the exquisite manner with which the outside is covered by the many varied particles of lichen. The inside is generally lined with feathers, and this fact has obtained for it the common name of the "feather poke."

The long-tailed tit is entirely destitute of any of that boldness so characteristic of the great and blue tits, and the utmost severity of winter fails in forcing it to leave its lonely haunts in the plantation or shrubbery to seek refuge in the vicinity of man; and in captivity it has such a quiet melancholy and loving deportment towards its fellow-prisoner, as almost to justify the appellation of love-bird. A pair once in our possession evidenced this,—for, on the approach of night, the female uniformly crept close to the male, inserting her head beneath his wing, and, nestling in security and shelter, thus passed away the darksome hours of night.

The eggs of the long-tailed tit are next in size to that of the minute goldcrest, and resembles the eggs of all titmice, in being of a whitish colour, speckled with red.

Indigenous.

Genus XXVI.—Accentor (Chanter).

Species 56.—The Hedge Accentor.

Accentor modularis. Selby.
Accenteur mouchet. Temm.

Hedge-sparrow. Reefouge. Black Wren.

This unobtrusive and modestly attired species is found in all suitable localities, and although not occurring in numbers, is yet so widely distributed as to be commonly met with. Its favourite haunts are hedges, in the vicinity of the farmhouse and garden, where it threads its way through the intricacies. Even in the centre of large towns, as in the public squares of Dublin, the hedge-sparrow can be observed at all times. Its habits are as unobtrusive as its song is sweet and simple; and on this species nature has unfortunately bestowed the privilege of possessing those beautiful bluish-green eggs which, in most counties in Ireland, are sought after with such avidity by juvenile bird-nesters; so much so, that it is their ambition to surround each of those elaborate designs, "where tawdry yellow strives with dirty red," with a chaplet of the hedge-sparrow's eggs. In a cottage in the county of Wicklow we have counted as many as 115 eggs of this harassed and hapless little warbler. However, this is not the only inconvenience the persecuted parent meets with; for to her care the "parasitic" cuckoo but too often confides her offspring, and then, with ceaseless toil, the hedge-sparrow labours to provide sustenance for her foster-child, of such ungainly growth that thousands of larvæ from the sod beneath the shady hedgerow must be immolated to appease the mighty hunger of her giant child.

Indigenous.

Family X.—Motacillinæ (Wagtails).

Genus XXVII.—Motacilla (Wagtail).

Species 57.—The Pied Wagtail.

Motacilla Yarrellii. Gould.
Bergeronnette grise. Temm.

Willy Wagtail. Devil's Bird. Deviling.

The most common and widely distributed of the Motacillinæ, the pied wagtail is found in all localities. Equally at home by the margin of the retired mountain rivulet as it is in the

centre of the stirring streets of the metropolis, it is a well-known species, and a favourite with all classes, perhaps from the apparent independence of its motions on the ground, or its pugnacity when occasionally intruded upon by any unintentional feathered interloper.

This wagtail is one of those lively and cleanly-plumaged birds which has ever found favour in our sight. Whether observed when quietly wagging upon some projecting stone by the river side, and uttering its brief attempt at a song, or when gracefully attending upon the footsteps of cattle, spreading out its fan-shaped tail, and flying upwards for a few feet, in active pursuit of those insects disturbed from the earth by the motion of the cattle. During winter it becomes more permanent in its relations with the city, and frequents stables and outhouses, or those yards or localities where it can glean subsistence during the rigour of the season.

With the usual fate of a bad architect, the nest is a clumsy structure, and is usually placed in the interstices of an old stone or ivy-clad wall. The eggs are greyish-white, mottled with brown, and bear a close resemblance to those of the house-sparrow. When discovered, they are generally allowed to remain in safety, as a curious belief amongst children protects them and their parent from their all-appropriating grasp, the "uncanny" motion of the tail having gained it the rather dubious appellation of devil's bird.

Indigenous.

Species 58.—The Gray Wagtail.

Motacilla boarula. Linn.
Bergeronnette jaune ou boarule. Temm.

Yellow Wagtail.

This beautiful wagtail occurs in similar localities as the preceding; perhaps giving the preference to retired mountain streams, and often found in solitary situations where the pied species would not be observed at any season.

More graceful in form than that bird, it is undoubtedly more beautiful in plumage. The bright Indian yellow of the breast, and its gorget of deepest black, with the light bluish-grey of the upper parts, combine to render the male, in his wedding dress, the most elegant of his species, whilst the eternally moving parti-coloured tail secures for him the title of "most dainty bridegroom."

Along the banks of the Dodder the gray wagtail is con-

stantly to be observed; and few species, which from their habits we might designate "semi-water birds," add more to the picturesque than a pair of these wagtails, so replete with grace and beauty.

The breeding places generally chosen are ivied walls, crevices in bridges, or old buildings, which are overhung with decayed herbage, under whose cover the nest is formed, and the eggs deposited.

At no time are we compelled more to bestow our fullest meed of approbation on this species than when observed searching for food by the river side. Now picking its steps as daintily as any boarding-school miss upon a wet day, it ventures cautiously into the water. But, careless of the admirers of its understanding if it does hold up its long-tailed feathers, and show a portion of its tiny leg, it is only a matter of necessity, and nothing more. Now picking up the water insects which had rested in fancied security beside that tuft of green herbage, it becomes so overjoyed that, unable to walk composedly, it actually launches its tiny form into the air for an aerial excursion, and is not completely sobered until blown down the river before the wind for some hundred yards. It now alights demurely upon some wall, and commences the rapid wagging motion of that ever graceful tail.

Perhaps at no time had a small bird appealed more directly to our feelings of sympathy than on the following occasion. In the autumn of 1845, whilst passing along our noble line of quays, near Essex-bridge, a male of this species flew within a few yards of our face, screaming its shrill alarm-cry, and, from the intensity with which it was uttered, it appeared to have been held in the clutches of some hawk or cat. It was joined with a mate also, in the same terror as the male, both birds screaming and flying backwards and forwards with their beautiful fan-shaped tails widely extended. On looking towards the centre of the river we observed their nest floating down with the tide; from the sides of the frail ark occasionally protruded the head of one or other of the ill-fated young, as every motion of the water seemed to threaten its dissolution. Soon many were attracted to the painful spectacle, witnessing this sad picture of maternal care; and who would not feel moved at a sight so sad, or look on with indifference?

Indigenous.

Species 59.—The Yellow Wagtail.

Motacilla flava. Selby.
Bergeronnette flavéole. Temm.

The Yellow Wagtail is a more delicately formed species than the grey; but, from the shortness of the tail, is deficient of that grace which is so peculiar to the other.

The rarest of our three Irish wagtails, we can only announce it as a very local summer visitant to our island, and that principally to the shores of Lough Neagh, in the north of Ireland.* Very similar in habits to the other species, it frequents more the vicinity of fields and meadows, where it occasionally nidifys. On one occasion we had the pleasure of meeting with it on the banks of the Dodder, near Irishtown. It was perfectly tame; walking and feeding along the pathway, and admitting of a very near approach, and, when at last disturbed, flew to the branches of a willow tree overhanging the water, where it uttered its pleasing call-note. About the same time another specimen was taken alive by a cabin-boy, on board a coal-vessel entering the harbour of Dublin.

The occurrence of this species in the north is a matter of surprise to us, as we should have suspected a more southern locality, owing to the vicinity of the point of migration.

A male and female in our possession, obtained at Lough Neagh, were kindly presented by James R. Garrat, Esq., of Belfast, a gentleman whose critical research on many interesting points of our ornithology are so fully appreciated in the pages of Mr. Thompson's Fauna of Ireland.

Habitat—Western Europe.

FAMILY XI.—AMPELINÆ (CHATTERERS).

Genus XXVIII.—Bombycilla (Waxwing).

Species 60.—The Bohemian Waxwing.

Bombycilla Garrula. Linn.
Grand Jasuer. Temm.

This species, unusual in its occurrence, has been obtained in some fifteen or twenty authenticated instances in various

* Thompson.

parts of Ireland. And as a general departure from that rule, where we chiefly find our most beautiful plumaged species to be summer visitants, we observe an exception in this instance, as the beautiful waxwing is only forced from other latitudes, an unwilling visitor to our shores, by the rigours of a severe winter.

A fine male specimen in our collection was obtained during severe weather, near the old castle of Timmon, within a few miles of Dublin, on the 21st of January, 1851, accompanied with another of the same species, both birds associated with missel thrushes which were feeding on the berries of the whitethorn. After some time the missel thrushes attacked the waxwings, and by their combined efforts forced them to retire from what they considered their rightful property. Both the luckless wanderers taking refuge in a ploughed field, the male was shot, and on dissection the stomach was found completely filled with the forbidden fruit.

Another waxwing, obtained about the same time, was shot in company with a flock of redwings and fieldfares, in the county of Longford.

The name waxwing, by which this beautiful wanderer is known, is acquired from the secondary quill feathers being tipped with curious scarlet, wax-like appendages. This unusual appearance, remarked by the ancients, caused it to receive the title of *Incendiaria avis*, the name bestowed by Pliny. Invested with many fables, it was believed to frequent the Hyrcanian forest, where, during night, it illuminated the woods with its flame-spotted wings. Admired only at a distance, Rome, on several occasions, underwent lustrations after having been frightened from its propriety by flocks of the harmless waxwing.

Not only has this species excited the interest which we have seen, but its breeding haunts, to the present day, have been hidden in the greatest obscurity, as in no country have they ever been discovered. Many suppositions have been formed, but, in the words of Lucien Bonaparte, the scientific Prince of Canino: "There are circumstances involved in darkness, and which it has not been given to any naturalist to ascertain." The same ornithologist observes: "In Italy their appearance in the large flocks, in which they are generally seen there, make the people look upon them with superstitious awe, as the precursors of war, pestilence, and other public calamities."

The size of those flocks, large though they be, can scarcely

exceed those which Gesner has remarked to "occur in such numbers as obscuring the sun."

Habitat—Eastern Europe.

FAMILY XII.—MUSCICAPIDÆ (FLYCATCHERS).

GENUS XXIX.—MUSCICAPA (FLYCATCHER).

SPECIES 61.—THE SPOTTED FLYCATCHER.

Muscicapa grisola. Linn.
Gobe-mouche gris. Temm.

THE SPOTTED FLYCATCHER is a species which demands considerable attention from the ornithologist, not only from the singularity of its habits, but also from being the sole representative of its family with us.

Living chiefly upon insect prey, the form of the flycatcher is eminently adapted to its pursuit, and usually attracts our attention by its sallies into the air after whatever luckless insect may pass. Perching motionless on its favourite stand, the top of a gate-post, or thorn in the hedgerow, it patiently awaits their appearance. A pair of the beautiful orange tip (*Pontia cardamines*) approach, flitting from side to side of the hedgerow in their playful pastime, at one moment close together, at the next widely separated, they look even more to advantage than that gaudy red admiral (*Vanessa atalanta*) which has just swept past: gradually they are nearing the spoiler, who hurriedly springs into the air, and tells us his success in the loud clicking snap of the mandibles. Returning to his perch, he again watches the circles of the now solitary orange tip in search of her lost mate.

The spotted flycatcher, to our own observation, in the eastern counties appears rather unusual in its occurrence, and is very seldom remarked in any of the counties about Dublin. In the neighbourhood of Cork and Kilkenny I have observed it to occur in more abundance. Having on several occasions received the nest and eggs from Dr. Barker's property at Stirling, near Dublin, I was informed by the gardener, Mr. C. Coghlan (who is perfectly conversant with all our native birds, and in whose collection this bird holds an honoured place), that the flycatcher occasionally appears, and selects any crevice in the wall as a site for the nest.

This species is also one of the latest of our summer migrants appearing upon our shores; and on its arrival at once prepares for the duties of incubation; and, so limited is the time allotted, that we are almost tempted to believe they had paired upon their passage.

Habitat—Northern Africa.

SUB-ORDER.—CONIROSTRES (CONE-BILLED BIRDS).

FAMILY XIII.—CORVIDÆ (CROWS).

Genus XXX.—Corvus (Crow).

Species 62.—The Raven.

Corvus corax. Linn.
Corbeau noir. Temm.

The Raven is one of the most interesting of our Irish birds, as well from its grave, noble, and dignified appearance, as from the interest attached to it by legend, history, and poetry, all of these having invested this solemn-looking bird with their various attributes.

The raven is a species but rarely coming under our notice in the vicinity of Dublin, although believed to be more common than it really is, from other birds of the family being confounded with it.

To see the raven in its native home we must look towards the precipices of our northern and western coast, where, unmolested in its haunts, and not subjected to any wanton annoyance, it seems worthy of the honours and dishonours which have been heaped so unsparingly upon it. Although not possessing the graceful bearing and deportment distinguishing the noble falcon, there is something in the austere dignity of the raven which awes us into admiration. His black and gloomy appearance is in admirable accordance with the lonely and desolate haunts it frequents. Perched upon some rifted crag, beneath the shadow of the precipice, he seems the seneschal of the shore, watching whatever prey is cast upon its territory. Adapting himself to all localities, he lives indifferently upon carrion, stranded fish, worms, insects, and young birds; and in spring, occasionally, young lambs may be treated rather dubiously with the raven's protection; generally, however, no kind of putrid or decayed animal matter comes amiss.

When taken young, and reared from the nest, it becomes familiar and even playful, and in the stable is of utility in checking the increase of vermin, seldom permitting a rat to escape, but unfortunately extends the same equivocal patronage to early poultry, or a young kitten or puppy.

Possessing great aptitude and unequalled powers of observation, the thousand anecdotes of their sagacity and prudence would require a more extended area than the limits of our space afford.

Coming down to us from remote antiquity, at a period nearly coeval with man, the history of the raven commences and is handed down with the legends and traditions of every age and of every country. In Genesis we find Noah sending forth a raven to ascertain if the waters had abated, and, not returning, it was consequently reckoned an unclean bird by the Mosaic law: and yet we find the raven appointed by heaven to succour the hidden Elijah by the brook of Cherith. And again, Solomon, in his Canticle of Canticles, describing the Messiah, says, "His head is as the finest gold; his locks as branches of palm trees, black as a raven."

The Chaldeans, in their favourite pursuit of augury, drew omens from the appearance of the raven; and subsequently the Romans dedicated it to Apollo, as the god of divination, noting every particular relating to it with superstitious awe. Strange it is, then, with so many admirers, to see Mahomet infringing on the holiness of the route to Mecca by allowing his believers to destroy it, the only bird, except the kite, to which that liberty was accorded.*

Perhaps it may have been in detestation of the raven which initiated Cain to the disposal of his brother's body, of which we have the following version in the Koran: "And God sent a raven which scratched the earth to show him (Cain) how he should hide the shame of his brother. For he (Cain) not knowing where to conceal it, it stank horribly. And God sent a raven, who killed another raven in his presence, and then dug a pit with his beak and claws, and buried him therein."

Thus, after having reflected the shadow of his wing alike over the Bible and the Koran, we next find the form of the raven transferred to the banners of the piratical sea-kings of Norway, and every Saga of their Skalds replete with allusions to this black and gloomy emblem, which, from its ill-omened appearance so often upon our own shores, does not surprise us at the interest it had demanded from the bards and poets of the day.

* Sale's Koran.

Occasionally, among those old remnants of the bardic minstrelsy of our island, we find many curious allusions to this bird. We might instance that of the bard Benean, who lived about the year 400. In singing of the rights of the kings of Cashel, he mentions one tributary province which should present the king yearly "a thousand goodly cows, not cows of ravens,"* the implied meaning being, that they should be in good condition, and not weak or sickly, or in any way liable to be attacked by those birds; which occurs to us as being a very original method of indicating the merits of cattle.

Held in veneration in most countries, the raven was seldom injured. Legend and tradition had surrounded it with a kind of halo, which was but rarely infringed upon. Cervantes has told us the unwillingness of the English to injure a raven, for centuries after the death of King Arthur, from the tradition of his transformation into a bird of this species.

After having attracted so much notice at an early age, we find, as the world became more enlightened, that the few good graces possessed by the raven had retrograded, so much so, that he appears before us "black as Erebus," on the title-page of the "Mirakel Buch" of the celebrated Faust. And in a short time the author's name was forgotten, and the book was only known by the name of "Die Schwartze Rabe," The Black Raven.

Gracing the poet's song from an early age, all have selected the "infausta cornix" as the most fitting mark on which to heap their obloquy. It is, perhaps, Shakspere who makes most frequent mention of the raven. In "The Tempest" Caliban says:—

> "As wicked dew as e'er my mother brush'd,
> With raven's feather, from unwholesome fen,
> Drop on you both!"

And in the "Moor of Venice," Othello:—

> "It comes o'er my memory,
> As doth the raven o'er the infected house,
> Boding to all!"

And Lady Macbeth, thus:—

> "The raven himself is hoarse
> That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
> Under my battlements!"

* Leabhar na g-Ceart, The Book of Rights.

But more severe, and yet more beautiful, is Marlowe, in the "Jew of Malta:"—

> "The sad presaging raven tolls
> The sick man's passport in her hollow beak;
> And in the shadow of the silent night
> Doth shake contagion from her sable wing!"

After so much censure, we must return to the days of Appius Vindemiator, who is, perhaps, alone in his praise of the raven:—

> "O, raven! croaking on the tree,
> Woe to the man who injures thee!
> Thou brought'st the persecuted food,—
> Friend of the prophet, child of good,
> Maligned, but little understood;—
> Woe to the man who injures thee!
> Childless he is, or childless he shall be."

Indigenous.

Species 63.—The Carrion Crow.

Corvus corone. Linn.
Corneille noire. Temm.

The rarest of the Corvidæ in its occurrence, the carrion crow is a species very local in its distribution, and appears to frequent principally the northern portions of the island. Of similar habits as the raven, it employs even more sagacity in its search for food, as the following instance, occurring to Mr. F. Fickling, of Norwich, abundantly testifies. "A heronry, from which I had on many occasions received heron's eggs, broken in a manner difficult to account for, and in most instances found upon the ground, induced me to watch in the vicinity, when, in the absence of the heron, a carrion crow dived into the elm tree where the nest was situated, and bore off an egg in triumph. On shouting, he made away more rapidly, but retaining his hold upon his ill-gotten plunder."

After many years of close attention to the species occurring in our eastern counties, we have never had the good fortune to meet with this bird. Our only opportunity of observing it was in the summer of 1846, when two specimens in a recent state came under notice with Mr. Glennon, to whom they had been forwarded from the county of Clare. Both birds had the bills and heads deeply encrusted with soft earth, and, as remarked in Mr. Thompson's work, when examined on similar occasions, they were completely swarming with sin-

gular unpleasant-looking parasites. On one occasion Mr. James Garrett, of Belfast, has remarked to us their occasional occurrence in that neighbourhood during autumn.

Indigenous.

Species 64.—The Hooded Crow.

Corvus cornix. Linn.
Corneille mantalèe. Temm.

Scald Crow. Praheen Cark. Carrion Crow.

Of the true predatory crows, this is our most common species; and, from occurring in almost every locality, we may observe it during all seasons. Regular in its attendance upon the shore in Dublin Bay, it may be observed daily, varying in numbers from a single pair to five or six, all actively engaged in examining the "rejectamenta" of the receding tide, and occasionally making use of its curious and well-known habit of obtaining food by breaking the shell of the cockle or muscle, which it effects in the following manner. The bivalve is seized by the bill, and the crow flies upwards in search of a large stone, which, being selected, the cockle is dropped from an altitude, and its contents becoming exposed by the fall, the ingenious rogue descends to enjoy the prize his sagacity has so worthily earned.

The breeding places of the birds frequenting Dublin Bay are at Bray Head, Howth, and Lambay, the nest being placed in clefts and fissures of the rock. Inland, the preference appears given to old woods, where the highest and most isolated tree is chosen for the purpose. That the character of the hooded crow would stand clear of the many charges alleged against it is doubtful, as the old henwives in the country regard it with especial abhorrence, asserting the injury done to their fowl while in a weak state, and the plunder of the eggs of every vagrant duck betaking itself to the fields to lay. For these reasons, in the Irish districts, it has received its best-known appellation of "praheen cark," the hen crow. On one occasion, at Howth, we observed a hooded crow closely pursued by six or eight sea-gulls, all clamouring a complete "hue and cry" after this disreputable character. Arguing from the silence of the pursued, and its previous bad character, it was doubtless about to put its thieving propensities in practice, by abstracting the eggs or young, when it was discovered and pursued. From the observation of several gamekeepers, we find all agree in condemning this species for destroying the eggs of the grouse in the breeding

season. Watching at a distance after having discovered a nest, they await the absence of the hen bird, when the pair of plunderers hasten to the spot, and in a few moments the work of devastation is accomplished. A keen sportman once related the following occurrence to the author.

Whilst crossing for pleasure a portion of mountain strictly preserved, and where grouse were breeding in considerable numbers, he startled a pair of scald crows from the remains of young grouse which had just emerged from the shell. The hen grouse appeared to have struggled to preserve her progeny, as, before my informant had startled them, he had observed one of the crows diving in the air near the place, possibly to attract her attention from the young. Since that time the same gentleman informed me that many of these birds had been immolated by him, as he would prefer giving one the contents of a barrel rather than the best grouse that ever rose to his gun.

Indigenous.

Species 65.—The Rook.

Corvus frugilegus. Linn.
Corbeau freux. Temm.

Praheen Crow.

This familiar, well-known species is widely distributed in all portions of the island, and occurs in flocks of considerable magnitude. Their habits as regards injury and benefit to the farmer having been so often discussed, both by parties who are perfectly competent to do so, and by others as equally incompetent, that we could fill many pages with the doubtful decisions of the rook's various advocates for good or evil. However, we think that country must be poor indeed not to allow a few abstracted potatoes and grains of seed to be set opposite as a remuneration for the incalculable services it performs, by consuming such quantities of wire worms which constitute, in nine cases out of ten, the usual food found in the crop. But, unfortunately for the rook, it has obtained such a bad name, that all the learned disquisitions in the world could not succeed in removing a prejudice, in some classes religiously bequeathed from father to son. The farmer's mind has become so tinged with thoughts of this "gentleman in black," that Cromwell is discarded, and the "curse of the crows" substituted in his place.

Unfortunate bird, the doom of Ishmael is determinedly enacted against it. Persecuted at all times, and by every

one, each field ventured into has some ill-fated comrade gibbeted, as if the greatest felon in existence. Let him endeavour to do good by stealth, and instantly the music of a clapper is ringing for his departure. Well for him, indeed, that his exquisite watchfulness enables him to baffle the many stratagems intended for his destruction.

Few persons profess to observe the least particle of beauty about the rook because it is so common, yet it has always been a favourite with us, both from its interesting habits and burnished black plumage, glowing with its various shades of purple and blue.

In many parts of Ireland young rooks are shot after a certain day in June, and concocted into a dish dignified by the name of a "crow pie," the merits of which is believed to be considerably enhanced if eaten in ignorance of the contents.

The evolutions of rooks on the wing are often extremely curious:—rising and dipping, and occasionally, when amorously inclined, cuffing and striking each other in the air. Seldom observed to more picturesque advantage than on their evening return, when we see "the blackening trains of crows to their repose" hastening from all sides to the shelter of the rookery, which, during the continuance of the breeding season, affords such a stirring scene of bustle, noise, and excitement, that even the great Florentine, in his "Divina Commedia," has not disdained to depict, in his own beautiful language:—

> "As the rooks, at dawn of day,
> Bestirring them to dry their feathers chill—
> Some speed their way afield, and homeward some,
> Returning, cross their flight, while some abide
> And wheel around their airy lodge."

Indigenous.

Species 66. The Jackdaw.

Corvus monedula. Linn.
Corbeau choucas. Temm.

This species is as well known as the rook, and only differing in being held blameless for the trivial, or in most cases fancied, injury it occasions.

Choosing a habitation in towns, and being fond of society, it has obtained quite an artificial character, and conducts itself in such a manner, as evidently proving the usages of society have not been lost upon its observation. Watchful of appearances, it affects neither the grave austerity of the raven,

nor the loquacity of the magpie, but pursues a regularity of conduct essentially its own. Cool when occasion requires, confident at all times, and impressed with an advantage idea of its own worth, and of turning everything to advantage, it gets on well in the world. Doubtless owing to its looking so high, as, to-day it builds in the church steeple, and to-morrow in the chimney of the castle; and again, as if "ennuyed" of city life, affecting a taste for the antiquities of the country, and retiring to the top of some of our round towers to nidify, as, out of six which we had the pleasure of visiting, four were tenanted by small colonies of jackdaws.

Few birds assimilate so well as this species with the ruins of those castles and churches which appear before us on every side, studding the island to point out where the footsteps of the soldier and the churchman had been imprinted. These are the strongholds of the jackdaw, as, perched upon some gable or watch-tower, it appears, with its greyish-black plumage looking as if it had been at one time black, but since changed to typify more perfectly the ruin of which it alone is the possessor. Under the battlements of the ruined castle of Dunmoe, standing over the Boyne, we have counted as many as ten nests occurring in a small space, the parent birds, flying off upon our approach, and again returning when we left, appeared the only garrison with which time seemed careless of disputing.

The jackdaw breeds also in the clefts and fissures of rocks, and in considerable numbers at Bray Head, Howth, and Lambay, at the eastern side of which island we have observed a few pairs appropriating as breeding sites the rabbit holes which abound in that locality.

Indigenous.

Genus XXXI.—Pica (Pies).

Species 67.—The Magpie.

Pica caudata. Brisson.
Pie ordinaire. Degl.

We might say of the magpie that nature has only bestowed so much loquacity, in order to make amends for the taciturnity and gravity that distinguish so many members of its family. Of a graceful form and beautiful plumage, it is untiring in the display of its attractions, and as it is common in the most populous and cultivated districts, it is familiarly known and universally admired.

Attracting attention from its peculiar chattering note, the Greeks, with conscious irony, represented certain talkative ladies as changed into magpies, a transformation which they believed would sufficiently explain the reason for its loquacity, and other habits peculiar to its lost sex. This vocal uproar time has made no improvement in, as we see to-day,

> "From bough to bough the restless magpie roves,
> And chatters as he flies,"

with the same unmusical note that centuries ago induced Dante to name them

> "Wretched birds of chattering note."

Of an extremely restless disposition, we seldom observe the magpie stationary for any length of time, but either flying from place to place, or perching on the roadside, and hopping in its peculiar manner along the ground. Although one of our most common birds, it is exceedingly difficult to approach within shot, and at all times conducts itself with such caution as if aware of its personal attractions, and, like other good people in the world, the value of preserving them.

Not content with its own assured safety, it watches over that of other birds. But, possessing excellent observation, it discriminates their character before its protection is extended over them. To the owl whom it surprises at noonday, a most determined exposure is offered; and even to the fox or cat, stealing along with the very perfection of care at the bottom of the ditch, the magpie becomes perfectly odious: chattering and calling, it will not stop until attention is directed to them, or, by its continued outcries, forces them to leave their cover. To-day perched upon the old beech tree over the farmhouse, it looks after the farmer when passing him, and honours him with a chatter of recognition; to-morrow the master goes to shoot, and away "mag" flies, chattering a bulletin of caution to the neighbourhood. Admirable in its calculations, it waits until the farmer has just gained the range of the woodquests who are luxuriating so freely upon his wheat, when, raising his alarm, the plunderers escape by the vigilance of their friend the pie. The gamekeeper cares not for the excuse of their being "vermin," noted thieves, and of a very exceptional character, but he remembers the loss of many a good opportunity by the vigilance of

the magpie, and endeavours on every occasion to add a trophy to the many others nailed against the outhouse door.

As the food of the magpie consists of larvæ and insects, it commits no injury upon the farmer, who only disagrees with it for abstracting some sickly chicken, or being over watchful of the ducks' eggs laid about the farmyard. Of both these charges the magpie is guilty; but as they are circumstances which rarely happen, they should not prejudice his character. To such perfection does it carry the hardihood of roguery, that it constructs its nest and rears its brood as near to the farmyard as possible, and fears not the slightest danger of being molested, for, with infinite caution, he changes the scene of his thefts to some other farmyard situated at a distance from home.

In the park attached to the College situated in the centre of our metropolis, the magpie yearly rears its brood.

Indigenous.

Genus XXXII.—Garrulus (Jays).

Species 68.—The Jay.

Garrulus glandarius. Linn.
Geai ordinaire. Degl.

Handsome as is the magpie, with its resplendent reflections, and decided markings of black and white, it is fully equalled by the tints and colours of this beautiful bird.

A species of very rare occurrence in the northern portions of the island, the jay is only to be found indigenous in some few of our southern counties, and in very limited numbers. We have abundant testimony that they once existed in much greater numbers over portions of the island than at present, as Rutty, in his History of the County of Dublin, mentions the jay as a species occurring about the city in his own day, a locality which for the last twenty years has not produced a specimen. However, an ornithological friend assured us of the occurrence of two specimens, some years since, at Ranelagh,* near Dublin. Several specimens, which have passed under our own observation, in a recent state, appear to have been all forwarded from their principal stronghold in Ireland about Portarlington, where a gentleman who has shot them in that locality remarks, "that, although they are rare, if well sought for they can be obtained at all seasons."

* Mr. Kinahan.

The habits of the jay in its wild state closely resemble those of the magpie, but of a more retired and skulking disposition; as its food is similar, it also resembles that bird in being a most notorious plunderer, closely watching the nests of the smaller birds for an opportunity of the parents' absence to destroy either the eggs or young.

When tamed they become amusing and agreeable pets, and by attention are taught to imitate many sounds so completely as to deceive the hearer, in some instances, unfortunately for itself, too well, as the following anecdote testifies: "A bird of this species, kept by the wayside in the north of England, was taught to set on a cur-dog at cattle by whistling and calling him by his name. One winter's day, during a severe frost, the dog was incited to attack a cow big with calf, when, by the dog's annoyance, the cow fell upon the ice and was severely injured. The jay was indicted as a nuisance, and consequently destroyed."

So perfect is this mimicry, even in a wild state, that, on the authority of Montague, it has been known to introduce into a partial song the bleating of a lamb, and mewing of a cat, together with the various notes of both hawks and small birds with the most perfect exactitude.

In the summer of 1848 we had the pleasure of observing jays on several occasions, in the vicinity of Sandal Castle, in Yorkshire, and usually surprised them, like the magpie, when hopping in search of larvæ, in the vicinity of a hedgerow.

Genus XXXIII.—Fregilus (Chough).

Species 69.—The Chough.

Fregilus graculus. Linn.
Crave ordinaire. Degl.

Red-legged Crow. Cornish Chough. Sea Crow.

This species, the most elegantly formed and graceful of the Corvidæ, is common, and to be met with in any situation suitable to its habits. Thus, around the stupendous precipices which defend the west coast from the fury of the Atlantic, we observe the chough in considerable numbers flying in the vicinity, and occasionally feeding a considerable distance inland.

A friend, writing from Newport, remarks of this species:—"The chough is very common here, and is one of the most beautiful of the birds which frequent the sea-coast and the lofty preci-

pices in our neighbourhood. I have been admiring this forenoon the graceful attitude and glossy plumage of some eight or ten, which are now the only tenants of the old Castle of Doona, once so celebrated as the stronghold of the dark lady, Grace O'Malley. The eggs which you inquire about are most difficult to obtain, as the daws build in the most dangerous and inaccessible situations around the coast."

Rarely noticed in the immediate vicinity of our Dublin coast, we have on two occasions observed a pair at the island of Ireland's Eye; and in the summer of 1852, when proceeding round the eastern extremity of Lambay, three birds of this species appeared on the wing, and in all probability had nests in the fissures of the rock.

Delicate in form, and beautiful in appearance, as is this bird, its haunts are alone where nature exists surrounded by the grandest sublimity of her powers. Thus, has it appeared to us incongruously placed, living and rearing its brood by those bleak, towering precipices which we see so often, as if leaning out over the sea, listening to the eternal murmuring of the ocean at their base, and from which the only prospect we observe is the boundless horizon. Well might we say,—

> "How fearful!
> And dizzy 'tis to cast one's eyes so low.
> The crow and chough, that wing the midway air,
> Seem half as gross as beetles."

Indigenous.

Genus XXXIV.—Sturnus (Stare).

Species 70.—The Stare or Starling.

Sturnus vulgaris. Linn.
Etouneau vulgaire. Temm.

The Stare is a species of such common occurrence and remarkable plumage as to be well known to every one. Widely distributed over the island, it occurs in the most varied and different situations. Thus, they will frequent and breed in numbers under the thatch of a cottage, without the slightest fear of the inmates; or they will congregate and frequent the dark, uninviting interior of caves, which lie open and exposed along the sea-shore.

Of inoffensive habits, they are always regarded with a favourable eye, excepting during winter, when, formed into large flocks, they offer to the tyro a mark too tempting to be withstood. At that season we also observe them in considerable

numbers exposed for sale in the different markets of the city.

Like the jackdaw, the stare is found as constant in its attendance upon the old crumbling ruin as in more natural places. Thus, those who have been in the vicinity of our round towers must have been surprised at the harsh grating cry of the starling from the interior, in some of which they form perfect colonies, as instanced in the round towers of Monasterboice and Donaghmore, in the counties of Louth and Meath; through whose narrow windows we have seen them passing in and out, flying amicably over the jackdaws perched at the entrance.

At the same time, as much prized for its beauty and varying colours as for its powers of mimicry, the stare is a favourite cage-bird with many, and learns with some care to speak many words distinctly enough to be understood, of which powers Mr. Macgillivray, in his British Birds, affords us the following example:—"When I entered the room where the stare was, he cried out—'Come in, sir, and take a seat; I see by your face you are fond of the lasses. George, send for a coach and six for pretty Charley. Be clever, George, I want it immediately.'"

Sensible, without doubt, were the sounds the caged prisoner uttered; but we have never seen a bird of this species caged without the "I can't get out," "I can't get out," of Sterne's starling ringing in our ears.

So different is the change of plumage between the young bird and the adult that many naturalists have confounded them, and described the young by the name of the "solitary thrush." Like other species, the habits of the stare lead it to the vicinity of cattle, or where the ground has been broken up by the spade or plough.

Indigenous.

Genus XXXV.—Pastor (Pastor).

Species 71.—The Rose-coloured Pastor.

Pastor roseus. Linn.
Martin roselin. Temm.

This beautiful bird has been obtained in about twenty different instances over Ireland, varying in locality from the neighbourhood of Dublin to the remotest isles of Arran, on the Galway coast. According to Degland:*—"Le martin

* Ornithologie Européenne.

roselin se nourrit de sauterelles et d' autres insects, dont il fait une immense consommation. Il rend, sous ce rapport, le plus grands services a l'agriculture. Il est essentiellement voyageur, se migrations se font toujours en grandes troupes." These accounts perfectly agree with the description of food found in the stomachs of British killed specimens, excepting that many of the birds obtained in Ireland have exhibited a considerable partiality for fruit, some having been captured by a fish-hook baited with a cherry.*

In this species the purplish black of the head, wings, and tail, contrast in a beautiful manner with the delicate light rose-red of the body.

Habitat—Northern Africa.

FAMILY XIV.—FRINGILLIDÆ (FINCHES).

Genus XXXVI.—Coccothraustes (Grosbeak).

Species 72.—The Hawfinch.

Coccothraustes vulgaris. Fleming.
Gros-bec vulgaire. Temm.

After passing in succession the preceding sub-orders of the Dentirostres and Conirostres, we arrive at one of the most interesting groups comprised in the order of Incessores. The birds composing it are chiefly remarkable for beauty of plumage and song, and at the same time render a considerable benefit to the agriculturist by destroying an immense quantity of larvæ and insects during the breeding season.

The first of those species coming under our notice is the hawfinch, one of those birds without the slightest pretensions to beauty or elegance of form, owing to the immense disproportion between the size of the head and body.

The rarest of its family in Ireland, it is only obtained occasionally in various parts of the country, and therefore seldom comes under the notice of any except the practical ornithologist. On two occasions we have been so fortunate as to have observed it,—on one at the Scalp, near Dublin, and the other in the Phœnix Park, in the years 1848 and 1852. In both localities the food was similar, the berry of the hawthorn; and from the tameness of the birds in the Park, where as many as three had assembled, we had every opportunity of

* Thompson. Glennon.

observing their habits. The berry seemed in all instances to be taken sideways with the beak, and broken with the same movement that forced it from the stem, and this, too, with the greatest apparent ease. This feat, when we recollect the amount of exertion required to break those berries by ourselves, affords a very good idea of the immense strength of the mandibles. During mild seasons it is not improbable that the hawfinch may remain and breed,—having on one occasion obtained a single egg, sent with others more common, from the county of Meath, and which, on comparison, was found similar to continental specimens in our collection.

From accounts of the habits of this species, remarked by other observers, all agree in its being a most wary and watchful bird to approach; yet those observed by us, on both occasions, were remarkably tame, and free from the least timidity.

The stomach of one examined by us was entirely filled with the kernel of the plum, the strong stone of which had been first broken by the bird.

According to some describers the hawfinch is possessed of a low, plaintive melody; but, however, from the immense size of the bill, it can be of very little value, and is remarked by Degland, when frequenting the gardens about Lille, to be uncared for by the bird-catchers from its naturally silent disposition.*

Habitat—Central Europe.

Species 73.—The Green Finch or Green Linnet.

Coccothraustes chloris. Selby.
Gros-bec verdier. Temm.

This common species is to be met with during all seasons, and in almost every locality, but seldom found at a distance from cultivated lands; it appears more frequently in the vicinity of the farm and garden. The natural resort of the green finch appears to be close hedges lying at the foot of hills, and its favourite breeding place in such localities, the tangled upper branches of underwood. However, as it approaches the cultivated districts, its habits change and it frequents the shrubbery and garden, and, in some instances, almost resembles the sociable grosbeak of Africa, in its amicability in breeding together. As one instance noticed in the shrubbery of Dr. Barker, at Stirling, near Dublin, as many as

* Ornithologie Européenne.

seven of the nests of this bird were situated in a single evergreen, and, although unusual for so many of this species to breed so closely together, yet when birds are not persecuted they become most familiar.

A habit of the green finch, which has not escaped the observation of ornithologists, is the peculiar flight, evincing its pleasure during the season of incubation, and which is generally performed at early morning, or rarely a few hours before sunset. Rising from the vicinity of the nest, with a seeming heavy, laborious flight, performed with long sweeps of the wing, analogous to the homeward flight of the rook, and uttering at the same time a very restricted song, with a low and agreeable cadence, it is abruptly ended, and the green finch falls, as it were, through the air, and flutters to its perch.

During winter the green finch congregates in large numbers, and associates with flocks of other birds, to search the fallow grounds and farmyard for food.

Indigenous.

Genus XXXVII.—Linaria (Linnet).

Species 74.—The Gray Linnet.

Linaria canabina. Linn.
Gros-bec linotte. Temm.

This pleasing species, more remarkable for the richness of its song than the beauty of its plumage, is the most prized and valued of our smaller song-birds. And if, in the olden days of chivalry, the emblem of the rich and princely was the noble falcon,—the bird the poor man has claimed especially as his own is the unobtrusive, humble, and yet melodious little linnet. With ourselves it has always been a favourite, whether when perched upon the gorse-bush by the sea-side, timing his low, plaintive song with the splash of each successive wave, or perching on the ivy projecting from some time-worn tower, "where now the linnet only sings," it seems as if animated with the spirit of some love-lorn damsel who had died there,—so very plaintive is its melody.

A common bird, it appears to be distributed in equal numbers in almost every locality, and during winter, like the preceding species, it forms into large flocks, and frequents similar localities, always attracting attention by its manner of alight-

ing and rising, and by the entire flock simultaneously uttering their short pleasing cry when disturbed.

On the approach of spring the flocks break up and the individuals betake themselves to their breeding quarters, indifferently choosing the bleak hill or the wayside bush; they but rarely select the garden or shrubbery as a nursery for their young.

During spring also great numbers of linnets are captured by professed bird-catchers, indefatigable shoemakers, and tailors, all three of whom we see on Sunday mornings wending their way home, laden with well-filled cages and their other requisites. The great proportion of these are captured with bird-lime and a call-bird, for one of which, on the authority of an English naturalist, the sum of five guineas has been given.

After the breeding season is over, another bird-lime *battue* is commenced upon the young birds, then denominated "branchers."

When visiting some of those stores of song-birds, we have unfortunately been pointed out, in many instances, some hapless linnet which, remarkable for its song, had been barbarously blinded, in the mistaken belief that the unfortunate little minstrel would increase its melody, and, whether from bewailing the sad loss it had sustained, or that it felt its captivity more lonely in its blindness, its plaintive song seems so increased as if anxious to expire in the very delirium of melody.

An ornithological friend, corresponding with us from Achill, writes of this species: "In my opinion the linnet has the most melancholy song of all our native birds, as, indeed, I am not ashamed to confess, it has occasionally moved me to tears: many times I have been sitting by the heath side on the hills of Achill, when the entire bosom of the Atlantic appeared one molten sheet of silver, prismed with the rainbow reflections of the setting sun; and, suddenly heard breaking the solemn silence of the place, fifty or a hundred linnets (which from their numbers would even appear to have crossed from the mainland to gain their last look of the setting sun) singing in one united chorus a burst of seraphic melody. The shadow of the sea eagle floating homeward to his eyrie never disturbed them, but their minstrelsy of nature rung out heart-thrilling until the sun had left but a broad glare in the horizon."

Indigenous.

Species 75.—The Lesser Redpole.

Linaria minor. Linn.
Gros-bec sizerin. Temm.

This beautiful linnet, which we know not whether to admire most for its diminutive form, elegant shape, or pleasing habits in confinement, occurs in much more restricted numbers than the preceding, and in summer is found sparingly about the hedgerows in the vicinity of the city. Appearing of more rarity during winter, we are unable to account for their disappearance; whether it is that they form into flocks as the common linnet, and retire into the midland counties, or seek in a partial migration some more genial clime, we are in doubt; but it is a species rarely indeed met with in any locality observed by us at that season.

From having many opportunities of observing them in confinement, in a large aviary in the possession of Mr. Thomas Watters, and where there were as many as ten of these birds, none were more amusing or attractive in their habits,—so much so that we might justly designate them the titmice of their family, so varied their attitudes and powers of climbing.

Possessing all the heedlessness, but none of the boldness which distinguishes the tits, we have frequently remained under a tree where an entire flock was feeding without occasioning them the slightest alarm; continuing their search along the bough, and clinging to it in every conceivable attitude, they approach within a few feet of whatever observer is admiring them.

The nest is an exceedingly small structure, and is placed in the fork of some bush. The eggs resemble the bird in being very neatly formed and small in size.

Indigenous.

Species 76.—The Mountain Linnet, or Twite.

Linaria flavirostres. Linn.
Gros-bec de Montagne. Temm.

Of our three Irish linnets this is the rarest in its occurrence, and in Dublin and the surrounding counties is only occasionally to be met with. Easily distinguished from the other two species by the yellow colour of the bill, and its peculiar call note of "twaite," it frequents the hillside and mountain pastures.

The only specimens of the twite coming under our own notice are those obtained by the bird-fanciers in different

counties about Dublin, and exposed for sale in the metropolis. On a few occasions it has been noticed by us in a wild state at Bray Head, Lambay, and at Queenstown in Cork; but although well sought for in each locality, the nest in no instance was obtained.

Indigenous.

Genus XXXVIII.—Carduelis (Goldfinch).

Species 77.—The Goldfinch.

Carduelis elegans. Selby.
Gros-bec chardonneret. Temm.

The Goldfinch, as regards its varied colours of bright yellow, black, and vermillion, is the most beautiful of our finches, and, at the same time, the most self-opinionated little fellow in the entire order; perfectly cognizant of its beauish perfections, it takes every opportunity of displaying its attractions, but possessing the most harmless, lively, and docile habits, we overlook its faults, if any, and at once admit it to our confidence.

Like the twite, we seldom observe the goldfinch unless in the cages of the "fancy," and, though occasionally we meet with it in a wild state in the county of Dublin, it is always rare, and only increases in numbers as we approach Meath. At one time much more common than at present, the continual forays of the bird-catchers have so thinned their numbers that now they are but rarely seen.

The habits of the goldfinch, where they occur in plenty, are well worth our attention, and the evolutions of a large flock are interesting in the extreme. Arriving at a field well provided with *bon chere* of thistles and ragwort, they sweep round or half across its extent, as if perfectly heedless of the banquet below; approaching the extremity, and apparently changing their intention, they return, and, suddenly dropping towards the ground, each bird flutters and shows its beautiful plumage to the best advantage, while hovering over the thistles with which the field is covered. In a moment the entire flock, yielding to the temptation, are actively engaged pulling and tearing at the thistles in search of the pericarp, whilst all are making the field musical with their blithe, mellow call-notes of satisfaction.

The song of the goldfinch, although pleasing, is deficient of the mellow and beautiful modulation of the more humbly attired linnet; and it is, perhaps, chiefly for its plumage and

aptness for instruction, that it is such a favourite cage-bird. At times we see its docility painfully turned to advantage in confinement, by causing it to minister to its own wants in drawing up the vessels containing its food and drink, the bird being secured by a chain and a link fastened on the breast, and its only enjoyment, the complacent admiration of itself in the looking-glass attached to the back of the cage.

Sometimes in winter the goldfinch furnishes a small contingent to the large flocks of linnets and other species.

Indigenous.

Species 78.—The Siskin.

Carduelis spinus. Selby.
Gros-bec tarin. Temm.

Aberdevine.

This species is only an occasional winter visitant to our island, and most uncertain in its periodical visits, it occurs either in large flocks, or as often individually.

During the winter of 1847 they appeared in many districts in the neighbourhood of Dublin, and in considerable numbers, particularly at Ranelagh, where they came under the observation of Mr. G. Kinahan, Jun. Smaller in size than the goldfinch, it resembles it in habits and song, and has also the same elegant compactness of form which distinguishes that bird.

By the dealers of cage-birds the siskin is occasionally obtained, and is generally captured by means of limed twigs and a call-linnet or finch. From the accounts given by those persons, they are described as being tame and easily approached.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Genus XXXIX.—Fringillæ (Finch).

Species 79.—The Chaffinch.

Fringilla cælebs. Linn.
Gros-bec pinson. Temm.

The Chaffinch, as familiar as it is beautiful, is widely distributed over the greater portion of the island.

One of the first to herald the approach of spring, we hear it enlivening every grove and plantation with its reiterated and monotonous "pink, pink"—challenging each other by their song, the entire wood re-echoes with their short thril-

ling notes, which, although not possessing the compass or inflection that distinguishes some of the birds of this family, is yet pleasing and agreeable. In Germany few birds are so much prized for their musical powers as the chaffinch, so much so that the most extravagant prices are given for birds when possessing first-rate powers, the style and class of each being adapted from the execution of the songs they sing. Amongst some of the most admired of their songs in Germany are:—1. The Double Thrill of the Hartz. 2. The Reitezong, or Riders' Song. 3. The Wine Song, divided into four kinds. 4. The Bräutigan, or Bridegroom's Song. 5. The Double Thrill. 6. The Gutzhan, or Good-Year Song. 7. The Quakia Song. 8. The Pithia, or Trewithia.* Few would suppose the common chaffinch to enjoy such distinction, yet a German proverb tells us, "such a chaffinch is worth a cow," from the story of a cutler in Ruhl having exchanged one for a well-known songster.

And Degland† also informs us that, at Lille, in France, "La gloire d' avoir le pinson qui chante le plus souvent, n'est comparable qu' à celle d'avoir le coq le plus terrible dans les combat;" and that, to increase its melody, the chaffinch is frequently deprived of sight. The same author also mentions the occurrence of a singing match between chaffinches at Tournay, in 1846, where three birds sung 1118 times in the hour: one, 420 times; the other, 368 times; and the third, 330.

In the formation of its nest the chaffinch seems to have determined to invest it in some degree with its own beauty, as, perhaps, its structure is the most elaborate and beautiful of all our native birds. Placed, in most instances, in some fork or cleft in an apple-tree, it is constructed with the greatest taste; the gay hues of different coloured lichens contrasting with the green moss, or whatever foreign substance it can appropriate.

> "Mark it well—within, without—
> No tool had he that wrought; no knife to cut;
> No nail to fix; no bodkin to insert;
> No glue to join; his little beak was all.
> And yet how neatly finished! what nice hand,
> With every implement and means of art,
> And twenty years' apprenticeship to boot,
> Could make me such another?"

So closely at times does the outward colouring of the nest

* Bechstein. † Ornithologie Européenne.

coincide with the appearance of the bough, that, but for the appearance of the female on the nest, it could not be identified from it.

During winter the chaffinch collects in flocks, and becomes a regular attendant at the farmyard and highway, and is an occasional intruder on the localities monopolized by the sparrow, so that we often observe it, at that season, feeding in the streets and public thoroughfares, with other visitors from the country, driven in by the severity of winter.

Indigenous.

Species 80.—The Mountain Finch.

Fringilla montifringilla. Linn.
Gros-bec des Ardennes. Temm.

This handsome and cleanly plumaged finch is only an occasional winter visitant, and, like the siskin, varies considerably in numbers.

Occurring in a greater proportion in the north of Ireland, it gradually decreases as it approaches the south, where it is only obtained during unusually severe weather.

Sometimes occurring about the eastern portion of the island, a few specimens are occasionally obtained in the vicinity of Dublin. Its habits and manner of living are said to resemble those of the chaffinch, which it also resembles in general form.

Resorting to large plantations where the beech is plentiful, and by the Danube, where this tree luxuriates, 100,000 of these birds often assemble together, and frequent its vicinity during autumn; and, according to Degland, so plentiful are they in winter, in their migrations on the French coast, that he has seen them killed by thousands near to Dunkirk.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Genus XL.—Passer (Sparrow).

Species 81.—The Common Sparrow.

Passer domesticus. Linn.
Gros-bec moineau. Temm.

The Sparrow is the best known of all our native birds; not only on account of its more frequent occurrence, but for its independent air and determined pertinacity in accompanying man to the remotest solitude. Perfectly at home in

the midst of the most populous city, it never suffers itself to be neglected, but adapts itself to situations. In aristocratic quarters foraging on the scattered bread-crumbs of the window-sill, and in less elevated localities contenting itself with the refuse of the street or outyard.

Not possessing much beauty of plumage, or perfection of form, the sparrow appears perfectly well aware of these defects, and seemingly not in the least discontented with its plebeian appearance, it never tires attracting our attention by its noisy and inharmonious twitter.

In the country the sparrow has the same amount of good feeling extended towards it as the rook, and perhaps for better reasons, for it destroys a quantity of grain and seeds of which the amount of caterpillars also destroyed offers but little requital. Constant in its attendance on the farmyard, it indicates its vicinity, long before we approach the homestead, by the incessant chatter of the flocks.

A perfect cosmopolitan, it rears its brood with the same satisfaction beneath the roof of the peasant's cottage as among the ornate mouldings in the palace of the sovereign.

Perhaps no other bird in the world has chosen so many varied places to nidify. From our own observation we have seen the sparrow breeding in the same tree as the rook, and occasionally even intruding on the domain of the heron, taking up its quarters some twenty yards below, and making amends, by its noisy bustle, for the gravity of its more silent neighbour. The same at St. Patrick's as at Notre Dame, we see them tenanting every available place, and crowding in numbers the parks of London as the orange trees fringing the Champs Elysées at Paris. At times, too, the sparrow conveys an excellent idea of the ludicrous from the sites chosen to nidify in, as we have seen the bulls' heads which grace the entablature around the Rotundo in Dublin with the hollowed eye-sockets filled up, and a joyful young brood twittering away merrily in both. And again, at Rouen cathedral, and Notre Dame in Paris, we see the monster's mouths forming the water-spouts of these old buildings well wedged with a goodly bulk of hay, from the interior of which proceed sounds which had never entered into the artist's idea of the sublime.

Indigenous.

Genus XLI.—Emberiza (Bunting).

Species 82.—The Common Bunting.

Emberiza miliaria. Linn.
Bruant proyer. Temm.

Bush Lark. Hornbill Bunting.

This species, although denominated common, occurs in much less numbers than the yellow bunting, and appears from its habits to be well known in those localities which it frequents.

About Dublin the shore districts near Malahide appear a locality where they exist in the greatest numbers. Dull in habits as it is in plumage, the common bunting sits motionless on the topmost twig of the hedgerow, uttering at intervals its protracted and melancholy call-note, and, possessed of a determined pertinacy, it will remain for hours without the slightest change either in attitude or song. A habit peculiar to this species, we observe a curious dangling of the legs when flying off from its perch, the bunting rising a few feet in the air, with the tarsi hanging out in such a heavy, stiff manner as at once to remind us of the heron.

The breeding localities most favoured by the common bunting about the eastern coast appear to be potato fields, and occasionally meadow lands.

Indigenous.

Species 83.—The Yellow Bunting.

Emberiza citrinella. Linn.
Bruant jaune. Temm.

Yellowhammer.

The Yellow Bunting, or Yellowhammer, as it is most commonly denominated, occurs plentifully, and is one of those well-known species, like the lark and chaffinch, which do not require the pen of the ornithologist to point out their specific distinctions. Smaller in size than the preceding, it is also more beautiful in its markings, and possesses in an eminent degree the same unchanging, lugubrious strain.

A curious habit of the yellowhammer is the exact regularity with which it utters, at a certain hour during the day, its few mournful notes. Thus, we might say, the hour of three in the afternoon exercises quite a magic influence on the yellow bunting; for, no matter how situated, it will at once commence its changeless and interminable chant.

In winter small numbers of this species congregate with flocks of chaffinches and linnets, and, when forced by the severity of the weather, take up a residence for a short time in the streets of the suburban districts. The yellowhammer manifests the greatest anxiety when the neighbourhood of the nest is approached, and at such times is seen to the best advantage, hovering about the vicinity with the tail feathers fanned out and extended, uttering those cries which a Scotch naturalist has imagined to resemble the words, "deil, deil, deil," take ye (that is, the nesters). The nest is generally a loose, careless structure, placed against a bank, or bottom of a hedge.

Indigenous.

Species 84.—The Reed Bunting.

Emberiza schæniculus. Linn.
Bruant de roseaux. Temm.

Reed Sparrow. Blackcap.

The Reed Bunting is the most beautiful in its plumage, and also the smallest and most elegantly formed of the genus. Differing considerably in its habits, it frequents the vicinity of reeds and sedge, or those hedges overhanging fences filled with moisture. When observed in such localities, the reed bunting is a handsome species; its black head and white collar rendering it conspicuous at a considerable distance, which appearance, joined to its habit of perching on some twig for hours with the same pertinacity of purpose, whilst it continues its call-note (equally remarkable as the others for sameness), renders it a species well known where occurring. Exhibiting when the nest is approached, the same anxiety as the yellow bunting, the appearance of the male and female is often very beautiful, their expanded tail showing the white margin feathers as they remain momentarily hovering in the air, displaying anxiety and terror for their young.

The eggs of the reed bunting are very curious, presenting a black mottled appearance, so very deep in intensity of colouring as if they had been splashed with ink. Other varieties are veined with black, similar to those of the yellow bunting.

Frequenting similar situations as the sedge warbler, the reed bunting has, on many occasions, received the credit due to that bird for its midnight song. Some years since, in the "Dublin Penny Journal," a woodcut of the reed bunting appeared, to which was appended the name of "night singer," with a long description of the melodious song of the bird.

The mistake was, however, rectified in a succeeding number by Mr. Glennon, who clearly asserted the rights of the sedge warbler, with justice, restoring it the melody which some admirer of the reed bunting had borrowed.

Indigenous.

Genus XLII.—Plectrophanes (Snow Bird).

Species 85.—The Snow Bunting.

Plectrophanes nivalis. Myer.
Bruant de neige. Temm.

Tawny Bunting. Mountain Bunting.

The Snow Bunting is, perhaps, the least known of the species we have described, which may be accounted for by the situations it frequents, and by occurring with us during winter only. About the Dublin coast we may constantly observe them, during that season, generally congregated in small flocks of from ten to thirty. A favourite locality, which is at all times frequented by them, is the road leading to the Pigeon House Fort, where they associate with the sparrows and chaffinches in examining the refuse of the road-side, and when disturbed, whilst perching on the wall, they disappear over the opposite side, and continue their flight for some distance, and again appear in a similar manner as the whinchat, and occasionally the robin.

When examining the "rejectamenta" of the tide, their habits are very pleasing. Hopping like the sparrow, they advance along the shore, carefully examining every thing about, and, on being alarmed, the entire flock rise together, and show in a beautiful manner the white markings of their wings and tail. From the considerable variation between the plumage of the adult and young, a great deal of confusion has existed about the species; the male, in the different stages of summer, winter, and immature plumage, being described as snow, tawny, and mountain bunting.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Genus XLIII.—Pyrrhula (Bullfinch).

Species 86.—The Common Bullfinch.

Pyrrhula vulgaris. Selby.
Bouvreuil commun. Temm.

The Bullfinch occurs in very limited numbers over our island, and in no locality in actual plenty. More common about Dublin than the goldfinch, we have many times observed

it in the old hawthorn woods of the Phœnix Park, and easily decoyed them to our vicinity by imitating their melancholy whistle.

From its decided and beautiful colouring of velvety black, pure white, grey, and bright red, the bullfinch is a very handsome species, and one much sought after as a cage-bird. The song, when heard in its wild state, is very low and plaintive, but the call-note of

> "The mellow bullfinch,
> Answering from the grove,"

is the one we are most acquainted with. However sweet and mellow, it cannot be classed with the other members of the Fringillidæ remarkable for song; and it is only when taught to whistle that it attains such an enviable position as a songster.

From Germany thousands of these birds are exported to London and Paris every spring, where they bring prices averaging from one to ten pounds, according to the excellence of their pleasing piping melody. In many instances a paper containing a description of the songs piped is handed to the purchaser. With such skill and labour are these birds taught, that they will pipe at the desire of the teacher; and so docile, that the greatest delight is displayed when noticed by the kind and attentive owner.

Indigenous.

Species 87.—The Pine Bullfinch.

Pyrrhula enucleator. Selby.
Bouvreuil dur-bec. Temm.

This fine species, so exceedingly rare in its occurrence in the British islands, has been obtained in one single instance in the vicinity of Belfast, December, 1819* (in the neighbourhood of which town so many rare wanderers have been remarked).

It is a fine-coloured species, and the largest in size of the family to which it belongs, and by its describers is recorded as being similar in habits to the preceding, and in being also possessed of a full deep tone whilst singing.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

* Thompson.

Genus XLIV.—Loxia (Crossbill).

Species 88.—The Common Crossbill.

Loxia curvirostra. Linn.
Bec-croisé des pins. Temm.

The Crossbill is one of the most interesting of those birds which excite attention by their irregular appearance, sometimes only occurring after a considerable period, and again as unexpectedly spreading themselves in numbers over different portions of the island.

Possessing equal interest from the curious manner in which both mandibles are crossed, it has obtained a greater amount of notice than the majority of the occasional migrating birds which visit Ireland. Usually appearing during winter, it obtains abundance of food on the seed and cones of the Scotch fir, larch, and other pines, and occasionally on the berries of the hawthorn.

Few birds coming under the observation of the ornithologist are more curious in habits than the crossbill. Feeding in flocks upon the pine cones, they allow us to approach directly beneath them without the slightest indication of alarm, and so unsuspecting are they of danger, that dozens have been obtained without disturbing the birds feeding beside them, in the following manner. A fishing rod is raised up gently towards the birds, with the upper joint limed with birdlime, and, tipping the nearest bird lightly with it, it is captured, and so on until one has obtained any number. Sometimes, also, they are procured by a horsehair noose attached to the end of a rod, and jerked off their perch with the greatest ease. Equally interesting when in confinement, it transfers its scansorial habits to the cage, and climbs in all directions, with its beak and claws labouring assiduously to discover an opening to regain its liberty. Indeed, as regards its powers of climbing, we might challenge the parrot (in this respect) to excel the crossbill in confinement. In some rare instances the crossbill has been noticed as breeding in Ireland.* In Germany the crossbill has been made the subject of a very beautiful myth, in allusion to its blood-red colour, the legend of which, translated by Longfellow from the original of Mosen, we place before our readers :†—

> "On the cross the dying Saviour
> Heavenward lifts his eyelids calm,
> Feels, but scarcely feels, a trembling
> In his pierced and bleeding palm.

* Thompson. † Longfellow's Works.

"And, by all the world forsaken,
Sees he now, with zealous care
At the ruthless nail of iron,
A poor bird is striving there.

"Stained with blood, and never tiring,
With its beak it doth not cease;
From the cross 't would free the Saviour—
The Creator's Son release.

"And the Saviour speaks in mildness:—
'Blest be thou of all the good;
Bear, as token of this moment,
Marks of blood and holy rood.'

"And that bird is called the crossbill—
Covered quite with blood so clear;
In the groves of pine it singeth
Songs, like legends, strange to hear."

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Species 89.—The White-winged Crossbill.

Loxia leucoptera. Linn.
Bec-croisé leucoptere. Temm.

This rare crossbill has, in a similar manner with the pine bullfinch, only occurred in a single instance in Ireland, and that also in the vicinity of Belfast, January, 1802; since that time it has been obtained, in a few rare instances, in England. Similar in habits to the preceding, it even appears to be more careless of danger, as its describers record the fact of its being frequently captured by the hand during snow time.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Family XV.—Alaudinæ (Larks).

Genus XLV.—Alauda (Lark).

Species 90.—The Skylark.

Alauda arvensis. Linn.
Alouette des champs. Temm.

Of the many birds passing under the notice of the ornithologist, all are found adequately endowed by nature; some with a perfection of form, and others with beauty and brilliancy of plumage. Some there are which to a casual observer

nature would appear to have neglected, and left destitute of any attractions. To which we might answer,—she has done so, but only to lavish all her resources in enriching them with a matchless and over-compensating melody. To this class belong the unrivalled songsters of every clime: the mocking-bird of the far west; the redwing of Norway; the nightingale of England; and the skylark of our own country.

Thus is the skylark introduced to our notice, not as the favourite of a class, but of the community; its admirers ranking equally amongst the noblest as the lowliest. Unobtrusive in habits as in its plumage, its crouching attitude in the meadow and stubble-field, concealed during summer by the height of the meadow grass, and in winter by inequalities of the broken earth, together with its habit of never perching upon trees, might cause it to appear more sparingly distributed than it really is, were it not for its impatient song, which prompts it to bid farewell to fear, and soar heavenward with its melody.

Breeding on the ground, its most favourite place to nidify in is the impressed footmarks of cattle, made in damp soil, which offers, when hardened by the sun, a sufficient protection for the young. It must be a matter of surprise that the brood of the skylark, apparently so inadequately protected, should escape the stray footsteps of cattle, or the numerous enemies the open situation exposes it to.

As to the song of this species, so pre-eminently delightful, we might well feel delicate in venturing on a subject which has formed a favourite theme with the poets of all Europe. From the quaint style of Chaucer to the "bonnie lark" of Burns, all have selected this "neebur sweet" as the most worthy of their choicest praise.

When singing on the earth, before and after the breeding season, a clod or bank is the station generally chosen, from which it pours forth its melody. But it is at daybreak that

> "His large heart in little breast exulting sings."

Then, amid the silence of early dawn—

> "Up springs the lark,
> Shrill-voiced and loud, the messenger of morn.
> Ere yet the shadows fly, he, mounted, sings
> Amid the dawning clouds, and from their haunts
> Calls up the tuneful nations."

Although generally the song of the lark is associated with morning, on several occasions we have heard it so late as midnight; but these were nights of unusual moonlight and bright-

ness, and at such times, if disturbed, the skylark utters a few hurried notes whilst flying off. Its song, whilst on the ascent and descent, is so varied, that many persons can easily detect the difference without observing the bird, the notes in the ascent being of a gushing impatience, hurried out, as it were, from an excessive overflow of melody, which, becoming gradually modulated when at an elevation, as if satisfied with its efforts, it sinks gradually towards the earth, with a sadder and more subdued strain. None of the poets have been attentive enough to observe this except the great Florentine, who, in his Divina Comedia,—

> "Like to the lark,
> That, warbling in the air, expatiates long;
> Then, thrilling out her last sweet melody,
> Drops, satiate with the sweetness."

If the term bird-worship be allowable, we know no people of any country in the world to which it is more applicable than our own, nor any bird more worthy of that eminence than the skylark.

Mentioned in a recent work on Natural History as being so valuable for its song as to bring the extravagant price of twelve or fifteen shillings in London,—if the author had the opportunity of pricing some of the birds exposed at the windows of the working shoemakers in this city, he would find that in Dublin they would average from one to three pounds, and the majority could not be purchased for "love or money." Such has been the answer of many who would starve themselves, if necessary, to feed their worshipped bird. Such was the answer of Huggart, a poor chandler in Belfast, who refused the offer of a cow for his favourite skylark.*

We know that the emigrant, who, having reared some favourite lark, takes it with him to another land, with a sod of Irish earth placed beneath it, that one day a portion of clay from the old land may cover him.

Indigenous.

* Thompson.

Species 91.—The Woodlark.

Alauda arborea. Linn.
Alouette lulu. Temm.

The Woodlark, although indigenous, is found in so very few localities that we might almost account it a rare bird, at least from our observation in the eastern counties: a recent specimen has never been observed by us. A resident in limited numbers in some few counties, both north and south, it has come under the notice of Mr. J. H. Lamprey in the county of Wicklow, and has been repeatedly observed by that gentleman in woods fringing the Vale of Ovoca, where it is commonly observed whilst singing in its favourite position on a branch, and is nearly as much appreciated by the people in the vicinity for its song, as the better known species we have described.

In conversing with dealers of cage-birds, who are constantly employed procuring song-birds of every species, they all appear unacquainted with this individual.

Although Rutty, in his History of the County of Dublin, mentions the woodlark as a species found here, yet, in later years, it has become exceedingly rare.

Its habits are described as nearly similar to those of the skylark, and its song, although not so diversified, as more melodious: it is also continued a longer time, and the bird perches indifferently upon bush or tree whilst singing.

An allied species, the crested lark (*Alauda crestata*), is believed to have occurred in a single instance, at Taney, near Dublin; but the specimen was not preserved.

Indigenous.

Genus XLVI.—Anthus (Pipit).

Species 92.—The Meadow Pipit.

Anthus pratensis. Bechstein.
Pipit farlouse. Temm.
The Titlark.

The Titlark, the most common and widely distributed of its species, frequents the sea-shore and vicinity of mountains in considerable numbers.

Of the most unobtrusive plumage, we might suppose it a species little known to the general observer, but it is generally successful in attracting notice from its peculiar habits. The same either on the hill-side or on the sea-shore, the titlark,

when disturbed, rises gently in the air, and times the beat of its wings to its harmonious though monotonous call-note. After attaining a considerable altitude, it alights on the heath or sandhill, and having rested awhile, again commences its renewed ascent.

The titlark is a more elegantly-shaped bird than either of the larks we have described, and, although seldom caged, bears confinement equally well. Subject to great variations in the colour of the eggs, we seldom observe two similar in appearance, all differing in various shades, from dark cream to a rich purplish red colour.

Another allied species, the tree pipit (*Anthus arboreus*), is believed to have been observed in Ireland; but as a specimen has not been obtained, its occurrence is doubtful.

Indigenous.

Species 93.—The Rock Pipit.

Anthus aquaticus. Bechstein.
Pipit spioncelle. Temm.

Rocklark.

The Rock Pipit, larger in size, and of nearly similar habits, as the preceding species, seldom occurs inland, or at a distance from the vicinity of the shore.

Found in considerable numbers on the northern side of the Dublin coast, the rock pipit attracts our attention in a similar manner to the last species, when flying off and uttering its call-note.

We were on one occasion considerably amused by the manœuvres of two of these birds, on the rocky shore near Portrane. Having a dog with us, which had possibly intruded on their domain, the male and female instantly commenced an angry attack on the animal. Hovering over it, and vociferously uttering their call-notes, they succeeded in completely puzzling him: the dog continued so abstracted, looking from one to the other, that it could pay no attention to our whistling, but sat with its eyes riveted upon the excited pipits.

Amongst the breeding places of this bird we may mention rocky islets, to which it often sallies out nearly a distance of ten miles from the main land, as at the Rock a Bill, on the Dublin coast, where we observed two nests of this bird, both occupied with young, when visiting the place to obtain specimens of the *sternidæ* (terns).

Indigenous.

FAMILY XVI.—SCANSORES (CLIMBERS).

Genus XLVII.—Picidæ (Woodpeckers).

Species 94.—The Greater Spotted Woodpecker.

Picus major. Linn.
Pic épeiche. Temm.

This handsome species is of very unusual occurrence, having only been obtained in fifteen or twenty instances in various localities over the island.

In no instance having the pleasure of observing its habits in Ireland, it came under our notice in several parts of England; and, during the summer of 1851, we had the satisfaction of observing it and the hoopoe in the forest of Fontainbleau.

From the stomachs of several which we had the pleasure of examining with our friend Mr. Glennon, the contents, in all cases, were minute worms and larvæ, which had probably infested some tree.

When observed wild, the motions and attitudes of this bird are remarkably elegant. Glancing rapidly through the glades of the forest, it flies directly towards some old time-decayed tree, and, alighting near the base, ascends, its stiff tail held closely in, and its ascent made with a hurried, impatient, jerking motion, tapping with the bill rather loudly on the bark in search of some decayed portion, where its favourite food is always found in abundance.

The breeding place generally selected is a hollow in some old tree. The eggs are very beautiful, of a pure satin-white colour, and are seen collected in great numbers in Paris to supply the various dealers in oology who require them.

Habitat—Western Europe.

Species 95.—The Lesser Spotted Woodpecker.

Picus minor. Linn.
Pic épeichette. Temm.

This species, more rare in occurrence than the preceding, appears only to have been obtained in six or seven instances, all of which came under the critical observation of Mr. Richard Glennon in a recent state. Of these specimens the two last in occurrence we had the pleasure of examining,—one an adult male, obtained on the 21st September, 1848, in the

county of Wicklow; and the other, an immature female, shot in the same county during the autumn of 1847. Mr Thompson has recorded the above facts in the Appendix to vol. iii. as the only information known to him on the subject.

From different data since collected, we believe this species to have been at one period indigenous to our island, as the name of woodpecker is well understood in the country, although incorrectly applied to several other species, as the creeper and the titmice.

As the family of the Picidæ only thrive in woods of large growth, we might expect the occurrence of the woodpecker in those large forests with which, in remote ages, Ireland was identified, and which were destroyed to aid in the subjugation of the island; necessarily, their shelter being removed, the species declined in numbers, and became rare and at last lost in a country where at one time it existed in numbers.

Rutty, in his Natural History of the County of Dublin, mentions "Picus varius minor," the lesser spotted woodpecker, as occurring commonly about Dublin; and proceeds to describe its food as consisting of grubs and small worms found under the bark of trees. By Smith, its occurrence is also noted in the county of Waterford. From these different sources, which constitute all that we know of its occurrence in Ireland, we may presume that it was at one time indigenous.

Habitat—Western Europe.

Species 96.—The Green Woodpecker.

Picus viridis. Linn.
Pic vert. Temm.

This beautifully marked woodpecker has even occurred in fewer instances than the preceding, which is, perhaps, somewhat curious, as it is the more widely distributed of the two in England.

An adult male, in the author's collection, was obtained at Sallymount, in the county of Kildare, on the 27th September, 1847. The gentleman who procured it remarked that some weeks previously he had observed two birds of this species frequenting some plantation adjacent to his house; but at the time, his gun being in Dublin undergoing repairs, he was under the necessity of waiting for some ten or twelve days, during which time both woodpeckers remained in the neighbourhood.*

* Mr. R. Glennon.

From a note in Mr. Thompson's work, furnished by Mr. Robert Montgomery, another is stated to have been captured by a gamekeeper in the county of Longford, in the presence of Drs. Gordon and Edgeworth.

It is a matter of regret that our Fauna does not reckon at least one resident species of this family, as few birds look to more advantage than this very beautiful woodpecker, with its bright and varied colours of black, crimson, green, and yellow.

The call-note of this species is exceedingly loud and shrill; and, as remarked by Jardine, when heard in a retired and lonesome place for the first time, the bird being unseen, it strikes the hearer as most remarkable and startling.

That the woodpecker was known to the ancients we have abundant testimony, as the elder Pliny has referred to it as a common species; and by Aristotle it was remarked as never perching upon the ground, but striking lustily at the oak-tree to rouse the worm and insect to emerge from their concealment.

Habitat—Western Europe.

Genus XLVIII.—Certhia (Creeper).

Species 97.—The Creeper.

Certhia familiaris. Linn.
Grimpereau familier. Temm.

Woodpecker. Tomtit.

This elegantly shaped and delicate little species is met with in favourite localities, and occurs all over the island wherever there is sufficient plantation or wood to afford it shelter and food.

Its habits—

"To him who muses through the woods at noon,"

are, perhaps, as full of interest as those of the majority of our smaller birds. Resembling, as it does, the woodpecker in its scansorial powers, we are always gratified by observing its motions. Tame and familiar as it is harmless, we can often approach within a few paces and watch its interesting habits. Glancing past us with a rapid wavering flight, it alights on the base of some rough, uneven oak, and, jerking from side to side, works its way up, occasionally enlivening the journey with its low, weak, sibilous cry. Chancing to observe an intruder on its solitude, we see an instant gleam of its silvery and satin-white breast as it passes round to the opposite side

of the tree, whence it peers cautiously to see if the intruder be still there. Again we observe it pursuing its way along the upper branches, and then, suddenly glancing down, proceeds to explore another tree.

A pair of these birds built a nest, for six successive years, near to a door in the garden of Dr. Barker, at Stirling, and on one occasion successfully attacked a marauding blue titmouse that had ventured to disturb their serenity. The eggs, as might be expected from the small size of the bird, are very diminutive, and of a glossy white, dotted with purplish red.

Indigenous.

Genus XLIX.—Troglodytes (Wren).

Species 98.—The Common Wren.

Troglodytes Europæus. Linn.
Troglodyte ordinaire. Temm.

In this species we have an instance of a bird not remarkable for beauty of form or plumage, which possesses an advantage over others, attracting notice for the external elegance of their appearance. The wren is one of those which, by the quiet simplicity of its habits, has so firmly entwined itself round man's affection, that in every country it has been taken under his protection. Preserving its wildness no matter how closely it approaches him, it is invariably an attendant upon his presence; and although in every season we may observe it an occasional dweller in the forest, and in the recesses of the deepest wood, yet it is alone "the wren" when in the neighbourhood of the cottage.

Diminutive in size, it is one of the hardiest of our small native birds; and in the greatest depth of winter we may hear their shrill chirp, remote from cultivation, in frost-bound localities, promising little in the way of food.

In comparison with its diminutive size, the song of the wren is the loudest of all our Irish birds, and during all seasons it may be heard outpouring hurriedly its notes, and at each conclusion jerking up the tail in a curious manner, and diving, when alarmed, into the thickest of the hedgerow.

A peculiarity of the wren, mentioned by many authors, is its habit of constructing several nests during spring, and then deserting them,—returning and making use of them during winter for warmth sake.

"The very nest
Is warmed through winter by her feathery breast."

The number of eggs sometimes found in their nests might almost exceed belief. We have ourselves obtained as many as eleven and thirteen, and, by some authors, fourteen and eighteen have been observed in one nest.

Well known for the persecution it receives on St. Stephen's day, the following reason has been assigned by Mr. and Mrs. Hall, in their work on Ireland :—

"It is traditionally said, that, in the 'ould ancient times,' when the native Irish were about to catch their Danish enemies asleep, a wren perched upon the drum, and woke the slumbering sentinels just in time to save the entire army; consequently the little bird was proclaimed a traitor, outlawed, and his life declared forfeit whenever he was encountered."

On that day half the parish turn out to "hunt the wran," which, when obtained, is secured to an ivy bush, decorated with ribands, and carried about by a crowd of urchins, for the purpose of obtaining money, each shouting lustily the following lines :—

"The wran, the wran, the king of all birds,
St. Stephen's Day was cot in the furze ;
Although he is little, his family's grate,
Put your hand in your pocket, and give us a trate.
Sing holly, sing ivy,—sing holly, sing ivy,—
A drop just to drink it would drown melancholy;
And if you dhraw it of the best,
I hope in heaven yer sowl will rest ;
But if you dhraw it ov the small,
It won't agree wid the wran-boys at all."

Indigenous.

FAMILY XVII.—CUCULIDÆ (CUCKOOS).

Genus L.—Cuculus (Cuckoo).

Species 99.—The Cuckoo.

Cuculus canorus. Linn.
Coucou gris. Temm.

Interesting as are many of our native birds, few claim the same notice as the summer-loving cuckoo. True, we may cherish the redbreast and wren as intimate companions for their attendance in our vicinity, and select the swallow and martin of all others for the confidence they repose in man ; yet to all classes, either the shepherd on the hill-side, or the confined artisan on his Sunday ramble, the almost magic call-note of this bird is the most prized.

Coming to us after a sojourn in another land, we only hear its glad notes when the earth has attired herself in her brightest dress, and her flowers have perfumed the nooks and dells which the cuckoo delights to visit. Then, chanting those glad notes which make boyhood gleeful, and age thoughtful, her simple harmony seems a universal epithalamium of nature, as she herself is one of those harbingers of summer which had been employed by the Great Giver from the commencement, speaking a common tongue, intelligible in all countries and to all men, to the savage as to the civilized. Not only prized by the community, who delight in the associations recalled by its music, it offers more attractions to the student of nature in its habits than any bird we know of. Shy and vigilant, it is ever watchful; and, seldom remaining in one locality for any length of time, there is considerable difficulty in observing its peculiarities. Nature has formed the cuckoo for a true wanderer; and, to do so more effectually, has deprived it of the entire of that parental instinct which all birds more or less bestow upon their young. To this is owing its strange habit of dropping its egg into the nest of other birds, and where, in most cases, the duped foster-mother bestows the same care upon it as on her own more natural offspring. In time, as the young bird increases in size and strength, it summarily ejects the weaker and less fortunate occupants of the nest, and succeeds at last in becoming the sole tenant of its unjustly obtained property. The nest chiefly selected for this purpose is that of the titlark (*Anthus pratensis*), and this is the species we generally observe following the cuckoo, in order to see it well off its own possessions.

The cuckoo generally makes its appearance with us about the end of April, or, in the words of the country doggrel, to follow its appearance and departure:—

"In April
Come he will;
In May
He sings all day;
In June
He alters his tune;
In July
He prepares to fly;
In August
Go he must."

Either in the plumage of the adult or young, the cuckoo is an eminently handsome species, and few birds can claim a more elegant perfection of form.

During the first days of August, in 1852, we were gratified by observing twenty or thirty cuckoos unusually grouped together, with willow warblers and other migratory species, in the vicinity of the old ruined church, which adds so much to the picturesque, on the small island of Ireland's Eye. On one or two occasions they uttered their call-note, but with such a gruff, hoarse intonation, as almost to have dispelled our esteem for the species. This unusual assemblage of so many birds argued some preparation for the "great flight."

In the "Book of Rights"* we find a curious notice of the cuckoo, in one of the commands of the sages of the nation to the King of Cashel, wherein he is directed "to plunder the cattle of Cruachan when the cuckoo sings;" in all probability the cattle being at that time in the best condition, and more fitted for a profitable foray.

Musical as is the call of the cuckoo, it is never more curious than when heard at midnight, coming from the depths of some neighbouring wood or plantation with a harsh guttural intonation, very different from the pleasing manner in which it is generally heard. A species well known to the earliest writers on the subject, Pliny bears testimony to the fact of the delicious flavour of the flesh, so much so that no bird could compare with it.

Habitat—Northern Africa.

Species 100.—The Great Spotted Cuckoo.

Cuculus glandarius. Linn.
Coucou geai. Temm.

This fine species, of which a single authenticated specimen has occurred in the British isles, was obtained in Ireland during the month of March, 1842, and now graces the collection of native birds in the Museum of Trinity College, Dublin.

The only information we can give of this rarity is the following note, furnished to Mr. Thompson by Mr. Ball, from the correspondence of the gentleman who obtained it:—"The cuckoo, pursued by hawks, was taken by two persons walking on the island of Omagh. It flew into a hole in a stone, or fence, or wall; was caught alive, and lived four days on potatoes and water. The inhabitants of this country had never seen any bird like it before, and, as they are constantly in the habit of fishing at Bofin and Arran island, if

* Leabhar na g-Ceart.

the bird were to be met with, no doubt they would have recognised it. The bird, when chased by the hawks, appeared weak, fatigued, and emaciated, as though it had taken a long flight, as woodcocks and other birds of passage do on their arrival."

Habitat—Northern Africa.

Species 101.—The Yellow-billed American Cuckoo.

Cuculus Americanus. Linn.
Coucou cendrillard. Temm.

This rare wanderer from the shores of the "great continent" has only occurred in two instances in Ireland, one coming under the notice of Dr. Ball at Youghal, the other obtained at Bray in the autumn of 1852.

Its habits are somewhat similar to those of our common species, only that it has a greater development of that maternal kindness so deficient in the cuckoo of Europe,—rearing its brood and bringing them forth with all the solicitude of a parent. Its call-notes are not so melodious or musical as those of our own species, and have been likened to the syllable, "cow, cow," "cow, cow," repeated very often, and for which it has obtained in the United States its common name of "cow bird."

It has likewise been remarked by its describers to vary its diet, by occasionally preying upon young birds and eggs.*

Habitat—North America.

SUB-ORDER.—TENUIROSTRES (SLENDER-BILLED BIRDS).

FAMILY XVIII.—UPUPIDÆ (HOOPOE).

Genus LI.—Upupa (Hoopoe).

Species 102.—The Hoopoe.

Upupa epops. Linn.
Huppe puput. Temm.

This really elegant bird, exceedingly beautiful in plumage, and no less so in the perfection of its form, has occurred during different seasons in various portions of the island, from the suburbs of Dublin to the remotest isles of Arran, on the Galway coast. Few persons can form any idea of its beauty

* Audobon.

without actually having observed it. The long pendent crest, capable of being erected at pleasure, of a rich orange-brown colour, edged with black, the black-barred wings and tail, and the body of a clear reddish gray, give it an appearance at once novel and interesting to the beholder. Described centuries ago by Ovid, he has beautifully depicted its transformation and appearance :—

> "Tereus, through grief and haste to be revenged,
> Shares the like fate, and to a bird is changed;
> Fixed on his head the crested plumes appear,
> Long is his beak, and sharpened as a spear."

The hoopoe was also well known to Aristotle and Pliny, and occurs in their works upon the subject. This species has come under our own notice in five separate instances, all of which passed through the hands of Mr. Glennon, the well-known taxidermist. In the vicinity of Rouen we had also the pleasure of observing a hoopoe apparently engaged picking seeds upon the ground in the neighbourhood of a farm-house. The crest was carried so close to the head as to cause doubt, for a short time, of its identity, the bird presenting an appearance so slight. Amongst the many birds which grace the cages of the dealers in Paris, the hoopoe is a favourite, and at the grand "entrepot," from whence the tradesman and the grisette are supplied with their favourite birds, and grisettes of a more advanced age with their eternal poodle dog, we see the hoopoe exposed for sale, with numbers of shrikes, woodpeckers, and other rare visitants to our own country.

Fond of variety in many things as are the French, they extend a particle of it to the locality chosen by their "marchands des oiseaux." Situated on one of the quays in the most populous part of Paris, the cages are placed in close order along a dead wall (truly so, for it is one of the divisions of La Morgue), against the other side of which the bodies of the unclaimed *dead* are resting. There the dainty grisette, bargaining with some dealer, expatiating on the hidden value of some small song-bird, takes a turn in La Morgue, and looks at the new arrivals whilst she makes up her mind regarding its purchase.

By the Arabs the claim of the lapwing is disputed as not being the bird Mahomet intended to have meant in the Koran, and the hoopoe is thus called upon to receive the honours assigned, of being the messenger of the amorous Queen of Sheba. The nest is formed in hollow or decayed trees, and the number of the eggs average from two to three, pale bluish-white in colour.

Habitat—Northern Africa.

SUB-ORDER.—FISSEROSTRES (WIDE-MOUTHED BIRDS).

FAMILY XIX.—MEROPIDÆ (BEE-EATERS).

Genus LII.—Merops (Bee-Eaters).

Species 103.—The Bee-Eater.

Merops apiaster. Linn.
Guêpier vulgaire. Temm.

This beautiful and rare visitant has only occurred in four or five instances, the greater proportion of which were obtained during the summer months. One of these, in the collection of the author, was procured in the summer of 1848, in the county of Wexford. The gentleman who obtained it stated he had seen it frequenting his garden for some five or six days, and that it became quite remarkable to the gardener and workmen for the unusual brilliancy of its colours, for which reason they named it a foreign kingfisher. Like the habits of the species in its own country, he believed it to have been more free than he had wished with his bees.*

It is a matter worthy of remark that the eggs of this species resemble those of the hoopoe; and that most of those birds of brilliant plumage have eggs of the same glossy satin-like colour, and in some cases transparent white, which distinguish those of the kingfisher and the roller.

Habitat—Northern Africa.

Genus LIII.—Coracius (Roller).

Species 104.—The Roller.

Coracius garrula. Linn.
Rollier vulgaire. Temm.

The Roller is another of those elegantly shaped and plumaged birds which favour our isle with a rare visit. Of larger proportions than any of those occasional visitants, the roller somewhat resembles the bee-eater in the general distribution of its colours. The first and only specimen of this bird ever obtained in Ireland, we had the pleasure of examining in Mr. Glennon's establishment, on the 8th of October, 1849. It was an adult male, and was obtained by the Earl of Courtown's gamekeeper, in the county of Wexford. By that nobleman it has since been presented to the Museum of Irish Industry,

* Mr. Glennon.

Stephen's-green. The stomach contained the remains of large beetles closely adhering together.

Beautiful as the roller is, its gay colours afford it no protection against the gourmand, as it is frequently observed in the public markets at Malta and Sicily.

Habitat—Southern Europe.

FAMILY XX.—ALCEDINÆ (KINGFISHERS).

Genus LIV.—Alcedo (Kingfisher).

Species 105.—The Kingfisher.

Alcedo ispida. Linn.
Martin pêcheur pie. Temm.

The Kingfisher is generally allowed to rank as the most beautiful of our native birds, yielding to none of the bright species of the tropics for brilliancy of plumage, but yet, in like manner with the bird of paradise, it is strangely deficient in elegance of form, as the bill is long and thick, the neck short, the feet very small, and the body disproportionately large. It is also a permanent resident with us, and in some situations occurs in considerable numbers, although in no localities in actual abundance.

Seldom met with in the vicinity of large rivers, it is in some retired, well-sheltered glen the lovely halcyon is most frequently found: there we may observe it during all seasons—in the bright sunshine of the summer passing us, with its rainbow hue, like a meteor; in the dreariness of winter perched on a decayed bough, watching intently over the half-frozen pool, its bright plumage contrasting as in mockery with the cold and cheerless prospect of the surrounding snows. The food of this bird consists of small fishes, principally minnow and fry; indeed, in some localities they have been banished on account of their injury to trout fry, but we can only say, the proprietor must be narrow-hearted indeed to resent an injury which, in most instances, is more fancied than real.

Few have observed this bird in a state of nature without bestowing on it their unqualified admiration, so very beautiful are its movements when in pursuit of prey: hovering slowly, it proceeds at a short distance from the water until its attention becomes arrested by the movements of the silvery gleaming minnow, then, quick as thought, before we have time to calculate the plunge, the kingfisher emerges with its prey held firmly in its beak; alighting on a stone, the minnow

is deprived of life, and swallowed entire. Again it hovers and watches unsuccessfully, until it alights on the bough of yon bending willow. The tall and graceful blossoms of the vestal lily wave in accordance with the sultry breeze; the banks are covered with emerald moss, through which tufts of the blue forget-me-not stand conspicuous; "pale, unmarried primroses," oxlips, and the foxglove, unite in embellishing the margin of the stream; dragon-flies of many hues play over the sunlit surface; afar the note of the cuckoo sounds plaintively through the glen; but yet is the kingfisher motionless,—alike heedless of the splashing of the dusky water-hen, or the cries of her duskier young; a cloud of ephemera dance their intricate medley over the centre of the pool, occasionally falling a prey to the droves of minnow below, and gradually approaching the kingfisher, the sportive fish leap gleefully after the retiring insects,—a sudden plunge, a flash of sunshine on its plumage, as, disappearing for an instant, it again emerges with its prey.

Towards the approach of spring the kingfisher prepares for the important task of incubation, and for that purpose generally selects the unoccupied burrow of a water-rat, the bottom of which is usually found strewed with pellets of small fish-bones, probably ejected by the bird. The eggs are five or seven in number, round in form, and of a most beautiful transparent white. Before the young are fledged, the nest is often liable to detection in consequence of the fetid odour proceeding from it.

Indeed, it appears strange how this bird maintains its numbers, selecting as it does such a breeding place,—without protection, and liable to the nocturnal visits of the water-rat, and the lithe and implacable enemy of both, the stoat. The note of this bird we have never heard; it is said to be shrill and piercing. The flight is also extremely rapid.

The ancients regarded the kingfisher with pleasure and gratitude, as they believed that, as long as the female sat on the eggs, no storm or tempest disturbed the face of the ocean.

> "As firm as the rock, and as calm as the flood,
> Where the peace-loving halcyon deposits her brood."

Long ago, in the studios of those of the occult science who had an "alligator stuffed," the halcyon was hung up with a thread, and allowed the highest place. The skin was believed to turn its bill to whatever point the wind blew from; and we believe it is Shakspere who makes use of it in that sense:—

> "Disown, affirm, and turn their halcyon beaks
> With every gale and vary of their masters."

The principal localities frequented by this bird in the neighbourhood of Dublin are the picturesque rivers in its vicinity, the Dodder and the Tolka. It may likewise be observed, that it is owing to the feathers of this bird that the "Limerick flies" have obtained their European celebrity.

Indigenous.

Species 106.—The Belted Kingfisher.

Alcedo alcyon. Linn.
Martin pêcheur alcyon. Degland.

This fine-looking species, as appears from its strong, robust size and shape, is a native of the other side of the Atlantic, and is only found by those great rivers of the American continent where it is more adapted to the scene, owing to its more bulky proportions. In two instances this rare wanderer has been obtained upon our shores, and were the first occurrence of the species upon the European continent. Both birds, through the kindness of Mr. Glennon, we had the gratification of examining and noting in a fresh state. One of these specimens, obtained by J. C. Campion, Esq., is preserved in the collection of Mr. T. W. Warren; the other is in the Museum of Trinity College, Dublin.

Habitat—North America.

FAMILY XXI.—CAPRIMULGIDÆ.

Genus LV.—Caprimulgus (Goatsucker).

Species 107.—The Goatsucker.

Caprimulgus Europœus. Linn.
Engoulevant ordinaire. Temm.

Fern-owl. Night-jar.

This species is not common, but in favourite localities occurs in limited numbers. Although not remarkable for its bright and varied colours, it is yet one of those unobtrusive, chastely-coloured birds in which the plumage is so beautifully blended as to render it difficult to describe. Closely allied to the swallows by its small bill and feet, together with the great expansion of the mouth, and its feeding on insects, it as closely resembles the owl in its nocturnal flight, largeness of the eyes, and soft appearance of the plumage.

So closely do the various species comprised in the Caprimulgine family correspond in all countries, in the distribution

of their marking, that a description of one might nearly answer for all.

This species is one which has come down from antiquity to the present time, loaded with many of the strange prejudices of the ancients; all equally as preposterous as the tales of the fabulous roc, or the ideal regeneration of the phœnix, handed down from Rabbinical tradition.

In the infancy of research after nature, this bird was accused of injuring the teats of cows and goats, and depriving them of their milk, for which in remote ages it received the stupid name which it is still known by. Described by Aristotle under the name ægothelas, a little larger than a blackbird, and a little less than a cuckoo, it lays eggs, to the number of two or three at most, in the neighbourhood of the mountain. Slothful in its nature, it flies upon the goats and sucks them,—whence the name; after which the animal is sure to die. It is similarly noticed by Ælian. Pliny embellishes its history with the fact of the goats becoming blind after being sucked by this bird. Once prejudice exists, so difficult is it to be removed, that in many places in England and Ireland the inhabitants believe it still capable of the same power, and also of infecting cattle with the cow-leech!

A more enlightened research in later times disproved those strange opinions, and dispelled much of the darkness which obscured natural history. But as the nightjar possessed a curious serrated claw, and numerous strong bristles at the base of the bill, and being seldom seen or heard except during the night, all this necessarily perplexed its describers, who believed that the serrated comb on the foot served both to hold its insect food, and to brush the remains of its repast from the bristles on the base of the bill. It is now the received opinion, that as many of the species are troubled with parasites, the use of the pectinated claw may be to rid themselves of those unwelcome guests.

The goatsucker, like the swallow, is a migratory visitor, generally arriving with us towards the end of May or beginning of June, and taking its departure at the end of August. In Ireland it appears to resort to similar localities as in England—retired woods and plantations, but principally waste lands, well covered with fern, furze, and heath. In the neighbourhood of our city the only locality frequented by them appears to be Bray Head and some of the Wicklow mountains, although, some fifty years since, they were regular visitors to the banks of the Dodder, near Miltown.*

* Mr. J. M'Cullogh.

Its food consists of large insects, moths, and beetles, which at twilight are hawked for on the wing,—a fact not unobserved by the attentive Wordsworth, who remarks,

> "The busy dor-hawk chases the white moth
> With burring note."

During the day the goatsucker generally rests upon the heath, or, in a few instances, it is found perching on a bough, a habit at variance with the structure of the feet, as, when perching, it differs from most of our native birds by sitting on the branch lengthways, or in the direction of the branch, and not transversely, as all our insessoral birds do, with the exception of the cuckoo, this bird also sitting and swaying his body whilst uttering his note. When resting on the ground in the daytime, a near approach does not appear to startle or alarm this bird, so that if stealthily approached at noon the female may be captured on the nest. The eggs are generally two in number, and rarely exceed three, and, like the bird, are mottled with various shades of ash-grey, brown, and black. The nest is formed in any natural hollow, or in one scraped for the purpose, and is surrounded with fern and heath. The young are described as being at first covered with long whitish down.

Towards dusk the goatsucker throws off its inactivity, and rises softly in the air, where, in the pursuit of its insect prey, it displays a beauty of flight and rapidity of movement scarcely to be equalled by the swallow, at intervals enlivening its aerial excursions with an occasional repetition of a curious note, which, from the whirring sound, resembles the action of a spinning-wheel. This strange, burring note, when heard on lone desolate heaths, has, in some parts of Ireland, impressed a belief that it is caused by the fairies, when engaged in manufacturing some tribute of their skill to adorn the person of their Titania.

The poet of Rydal Mount has well described this bird when engaged in hawking for its prey—

> "The burring dor-hawk round and round is wheeling,
> That solitary bird
> Is all that can be heard
> In silence, deeper far than deepest noon."

Like that of the corn-crake, this bird has also a peculiarity in its call, as, at one moment, we hear it at a distance, and the next in our immediate vicinity. The call is also capable of con-

siderable variation, on which a writer, describing the lakes of Cumberland, commences a sonnet observant of its change:

"The night-hawk is singing his frog-like tune."

Not only in our own country have these birds been rendered mysterious, but even in Africa and Australia they are invested with preternatural attributes. In the last country the colonists have named one the devil-bird, from its horribly grotesque appearance and cry.

In the western hemisphere the most remarkable of the many strange species of that land are the "whip-poor-will," and "chuck-will's-widow," both of which nearly resemble our own species in size and colour.

Habitat—Southern Europe.

FAMILY XXII.—HIRUNDINÆ.

Genus LVI.—Hirundo (Swallow).

Species 108.—The Common Swallow.

Hirundo rustica. Linn.
Hirondelle de cheminée. Temm.

This sweet harbinger of summer has from the earliest ages been protected by man; and, unlike the generality of birds, who nidify and rear their broods in inaccessible situations, remote from man, the swallow banishes all fear, and, reposing confidence in him, becomes a familiar attendant in all situations. The kraal of the Hottentot, the hut of the Esquimaux, the minarets of Cairo, and the peasant's cot of our own island, receive in turn the visits of the summer-loving swallow.

Its migrations have been remarked at an early era, and are mentioned by the prophet Jeremiah in the Old Testament. It was also attentively observed by many of the half barbarous nations of antiquity; its habits and migrations noted; and speculations entertained, by its early coming, on the value and products of the ripening harvest.

On the authority of Edwards, it was a great favourite with the Greeks, particularly at Rhodes, where a festival was kept called "χελιδόνια," which was a holiday for the Greek boys, who carried about young swallows, and sung a song preserved in the works of Meursius, which has been thus rendered in English:

"He comes! he comes! who loves to hear
Soft sunny hours, and seasons fair:
The swallow hither comes to rest
His sable wing and snowy breast."

Nearly similar to that of Meursius we have another song, which the ingenious young rogues made use of as an excuse to levy contributions on the good nature of their fellow-citizens, and which the happiness of the day gave them almost the liberty of enforcing:

"The swallow, the swallow, has burst on the sight;
He brings us gay seasons of vernal delight:
His back it is sable, his belly is white.
Have you nothing to spare
That his palate may please,—
A fig, or a pear,
Or a slice of rich cheese?
Mark! he bars all delay:
At a word, my friend, say,
Is it yes,—is it nay?
Do we go? do we stay?
One gift, and we're gone:
Refuse, and anon
On your gate and your door
All our fury we pour;
Or our strength shall be tried
On your sweet little bride.
From her seat we will tear her,—
From her home we will bear her:
She is light, and will ask
But small hands to the task.
Let your bounty then lift,
Help and aid, too, our mirth;
And whatever the gift,
Let its size speak its worth.
The swallow, the swallow,
Upon you doth wait,—
An almsman and suppliant,
He stands at your gate.
Set open, set open,
Your gate and your door;
Neither giants nor grey-beards
Your bounty implore."*

A favourite with the poets, all have sung the praises of this "fleet messenger of summer days," the same to-day as when Anacreon sung:—

"Once in each revolving year,
Gentle bird, we find thee here—
When nature wears her summer vest
Thou com'st to weave thy simple nest,
And, when the chilling winter lours,
Again thou seek'st the genial bowers
Of Memphis, or the shores of Nile,
Where sunny hours for ever smile."

* Mitchell's Knights of Aristophanes.

Thus with us, as in that olden time, the swallow never knows a winter. Rendered classical from the many associations which cling to it, from the time of Ovid's Philomela and Progne to the day when Dante, alluding to the fable, wrote of its song as—

> " In that hour,
> When near the dawn the swallow her sad lay,
> Remembering, haply, ancient griefs, renews."

The story is well known of a thin brass plate having been fixed on a swallow, with the inscription :—

" Prithee, swallow, whither goest thou in winter ?"

The bird returned next spring, with the answer subjoined :—

" To Anthony, of Athens ; why dost thou inquire ?"

The swallow generally arrives with us early in April, and about a month after its arrival prepares its nest, which is placed against the rafters, or under the eaves of a barn or out-house. Sometimes the face of rocks or quarries are chosen as a place for incubation. At variance with its habits in our island, in England the swallow builds a nest some short distance down the chimney (whence the name), a place scarcely ever resorted to in Ireland. The nest is rather strong, and is formed of mud or clay, intermingled and strengthened with straws, and lined with feathers, the site being usually returned to yearly by the same birds.

The eggs are four or five in number, in colour reddish white, spotted with purplish red. In some parts of the country there exists a curious prejudice against taking the eggs of this harmless bird, the alleged consequence attending the act being the cows losing their milk ; and hardy is the venturesome urchin who, in defiance of the acknowledged authority, determines to possess himself of a prize attended with such consequences, with the perfection of ingenuity first trying the experiment in some neighbour's barn, in hopes of escaping the supposed punishment. The food of this species consists of gnats, flies, and the various ephemera which in summer fill the air to a great extent, and which, if suffered to exist, would render man miserable, and, finally, the earth uninhabitable. No wonder, then, is it that man protects and looks with gratitude on his little preserver from the Egyptian plague ; or, in the language of the philosopher, Sir Humphrey Davy, who, speaking of the swallow, says :—" He is the constant destroyer of insects, the friend of man, and, with the stork and the ibis, may be regarded as a sacred bird."

It is a lovely sight on a quiet evening to observe a num-

ber of swallows skimming over some pool for insects, apparently gliding along on motionless wings without an effort; the curving sweep, the abrupt and graceful turn, and the pleased twitter, varied at intervals by the sudden snap of the mandibles closing on some luckless insect; or, occasionally, in a circling sweep, snatching from the surface of the water some drowning fly,—

> "The restless swallow's arrowy flight is seen,
> Dimpling the sunny waves, then lost amid the green."

The swallow is a fearless little fellow, and not to be intimidated by the approach of any of the birds of prey. The instant one is observed intruding on their feeding grounds, a shrill alarm is quickly sounded, as a note of preparation to the surrounding birds, who join in a body, give chase, buffet, strike, and finally drive off the unsuccessful tyrant. The fox stealing stealthily along the briery ditch, the cat silently working her way through the clustering ivy—both on murderous deeds intent—do not escape the watchful eye of the attentive swallow, who with loud clamour compels them unwillingly to depart.

Nor is the swallow destitute of song, its short and simple melody being amongst the first to herald in the morning; it is also uttered when on the wing, and in the neighbourhood of the nest.

Another note of the swallow is its shrill alarm, which Homer has likened to the sound of Ulysses' bow amongst the suitors, when

> "From his essaying hand the string let fly,
> Twang'd short and sharp, like the shrill swallow's cry."

Towards the end of summer the swallows collect in considerable numbers, admonished by the fading foliage, and the chill blast of the autumnal eve, and prepare to bid a reluctant farewell to the scenes of their once busy cares. Happy bird, in a few days it glides among the flowery acacias of a more genial clime!

We may observe that some of the finest gems of modern German melody are written on the return of the swallow. In France and Italy their many claims to protection are disallowed, and they are there offered for sale, like plover in our own markets, to satisfy some fastidious palate.

Habitat—Northern Africa.

Species 109.—The Window Martin.

Hirundo urbica. Linn.
Hirondelle de fenêtre. Temm.

The beautiful window martin is the most decidedly marked and cleanest looking in plumage of the interesting family to which it belongs. Like its neighbour, the swallow, it is never molested, or receives annoyance from man; although occasionally, when it carries its familiarity too far, and is on the point of becoming more "free than welcome," by taking possession of a window, and building nest beside nest, with the most determined pertinacity in excluding the light, it is generally pardoned, and allowed to bustle away for the short sweet time it sojourns with us. Cleanly and beautiful in plumage, as it is harmless and interesting in its habits, the martin is found in the most opposite localities over the island: equally at home when flying along the streets of the city as by the wayside of the country village, it is an invariable attendant upon the great and sublime in nature; as, around the immense precipices which fringe the western coast of Ireland we observe their tiny forms winging along,

"Half as gross as beetles,"

midway those bleak and eternal-looking rocks; and often, when entering a cave situated remote and solitary, we can scarcely believe that those birds, which are clustering about their nests overhead, can be the same sociable companions we hear chirping at daybreak from their "domed palaces" in the window corner.

Among the many interesting habits which have so much endeared the martin to the community, is the wonderful and beautiful instinct with which it is endowed, returning every year to its primal birthplace. No matter how changed the locality by decay or improvement, the old hallowed spot is found out, and year after year they return, pass over cities and towns, and, by that extraordinary instinct implanted by Providence, reach at last their old haunts, and seem almost to twitter with a pleased feeling of recognition at the sites of the nests where they had first found life.

Varied as are its breeding haunts, the window of the country inn and the fissured cavern by the sea-side, we had much pleasure in observing their choice of breeding places in other countries. Over the great doorways of the cathedrals of Notre Dame, at Paris, and St. Ouen, at Rouen, we see immense spaces filled up and occupied in those sculptured and

bas-relief figures of saints, projecting forward in a prominent manner from the surface.

There, crowded by entire colonies, the martins are ever congregated, giving an air of the ridiculous to the sublimity which invests the workmanship so profusely decorative, by the complication of projecting straw and hay which sets its artistic appearance at nought: for instance, at Notre Dame, where the central figure has the arms outstretched in an attitude of prayer, three pair of saucy martins, determined to "sleep in the bosom of Abraham," yearly rear their broods in the cavity of the arms.

At the grand arch of triumph, near the barrier D'Etoile, we see the nests crowding the spaces occupied by the names of Kellerman, Suchet, and Kleber, almost blotting them from view, with the others whose names are inscribed upon it.

Habitat—Northern Africa.

Species 110.—The Sand Martin.

Hirundo riparia. Linn.
Hirondelle de rivage. Temm.

The Sand Martin, the smallest and plainest coloured of the Hirundinæ, is not so widely distributed, or occurs in such numbers, as the more common species, but it is yet found in considerable numbers in such localities as are suited to its habits. The earliest in appearing upon our shores of any of its congeners, we may occasionally observe a few individuals cheerlessly skimming over the water-side as early as the end of March, which must appear somewhat strange to the ornithologist when we are informed by Degland: "Cette espèce arrive dans le nord de la France *apres* ses congènères et repart avant elles."*

Arriving in flocks, they occupy at once their breeding haunts; and in places, where for days we had unsuccessfully watched for their coming, on some morning we find, perhaps, some fifty individuals, chitting with all the *sang froid* of a swallow, perfectly unconcerned after their long voyage; they appear as if they had never left the locality (an absurd idea still clung to by the ignorant).

Differing from all the swallows, the sand martin is the most unsocial of its family in its relations with man, leaving his vicinity, and taking up its quarters by the loamy side of the sand-pit, or against the face of some abrupt hill-side, which shows exposed some layers of soft sand, suited for its habitation.

* Ornithologie Européenne.

Beautiful as are the evolutions of these volatile birds, from the bold sweeping flight of the stately swift to the easy gliding one of the martin, the present species yields to none for the elegance of its aerial motion. Although keeping at a distance from man, we might suppose the sand martin difficult of access; but the entire colony will often allow an intruder to watch their mining operations without the least alarm; and it is a curious sight where some dozen birds, supporting themselves with their feet and tail, and scooping a hole with their bills, resemble so many feathered augers twisting and turning at the hole they are engaged in excavating.

Frequenting some localities in considerable numbers, we might instance the many quarries along the side of the Tolka river, and the northern side of the Hill of Howth, where the perpendicular face of the sand exhibits a most curious appearance from the many perforated holes worked by these artisans of nature. The eggs are from five to six in number, deposited at the end of the burrow, and have the same pearly-white appearance that so much distinguishes the window martin.

Habitat—Northern Africa.

Species 111.—The Purple Martin.

Hirundo purpurea. Linn.
Hirondelle pourpre. Degland.

This rare species has only occurred in a single instance, a specimen obtained near Kingstown sometime in 1839. It was forwarded to Dr. Scouler, a few hours after being procured, for the purposes of dissection, and was afterwards placed in the Museum of the Royal Dublin Society. It occurs in considerable numbers during summer in the United States and Canada, from which distant lands this rare wanderer had visited our shores.

Habitat—North America.

Genus LVII.—Cypselus (Swift).

Species 112.—The Common Swift.

Cypselus apus. Linn.
Martinet de muraille. Temm.

This fine species, which seems almost to have been solely formed for living in the air, is one of the most interesting of the many species which gladden our shores by their presence during summer. The largest of our common species, it is

the latest in arriving, and the first to take its departure. Admirably fitted for the flight nature has intended it to endure, its glossy-green plumage harmonizes beautifully with its bold, sweeping, and desultory flight.

Similar as are all the swallows in their habits, no other family differ so widely in the structure of the nest. We have already seen the mud-built domicile of the swallow, the window-corner domed structure of the martin, and the dark dwelling in the sandpit of the sand martin,—with the swift we see none of these localities selected, but, searching for some crevice in the time-rent tower, or an entrance under the eave of some church or castle, it nidifys there, and rears its small brood of *voyageurs*.

We might call the swift the rarest of the family in its occurrence in Ireland, excepting, of course, those species which have only appeared in one or two instances.

On its arrival, like the sand martin and swallow, it generally selects its breeding haunts at once, in most cases the same the bird had employed the preceding year.

From notes taken on different ornithological tours, we have observed the swift to occur in greater numbers in the city of Dublin than either London or Paris, or any of the large towns of either countries visited. True, we may see the swift dashing with its impetuous flight about the most populous districts of London; and in every Continental town, from the spire of St. Gedules, at Brussels, to the Cathedral of Strasburgh, observe small parties with the same headlong speed hawking in the air about their vicinity; yet, in almost all the principal streets of Dublin the swift lives and "forays" on the wing in the greatest abundance; so much so, that we have, on many occasions, observed crowds of car-boys and others striking at them on the wing with whips, or other missiles, in the neighbourhood of the quays, frequented for their insect food; and, unfortunately, from the harmless and unsuspecting nature of the bird, with too much success; as on one occasion we saw eight of those unfortunate birds "living in death," with their wings broken, and their bodies covered with blood, offered to the curious for the merest trifle.

The swift is well known to the inhabitants of Dublin, attracting their attention by its loud, shrill, piercing scream, uttered when sweeping past upon the wing, and often so loud and startling as to alarm equestrians for their safety in the public streets. On one occasion, in a sultry evening in July last, some swifts rushed past a horse's head, in the neighbourhood of Westmoreland-street, screaming so loudly that

the horse became excited, and endeavoured to dismount his rider, and at last took fright and galloped up Sackville-street.

Exceedingly reckless in the impetuosity of its flight, a swift in our possession was obtained by striking itself violently against a gentleman's hat in Suffolk-street, falling stunned and senseless at his side. To this habit, occasionally observed by the ancients, we are, doubtless, indebted for the idea of the swift's blindness, remarked by Aristotle and Pliny.

Resembling the window martin in the great variety of its breeding sites, we see many window sills of the principal houses in the squares and streets of Dublin with two or three pair of swifts tenanting the crevices beneath.

Along Bray, Howth, and Lambay Island, we may observe the natural breeding places of the swift in crannies of the rock or precipices overhanging the sea.

Occasionally we may see the swift breeding in company with the jackdaw and starling, in the Round Towers of the country, as at Lusk, Monasterboice, and Kildare.

Habitat—Northern Africa.

Species 113.—The Alpine Swift.

Cypselus Alpinus. Linn.
Martinet a ventre blanc. Temm.

The Alpine Swift, easily distinguished from the common species by its more extended sweep of wing and the white colour of the under parts, has only been obtained in a very few instances. The first accredited specimen ever occurring in the British isles was taken off Cape Clear, some short distance from land; a second specimen was procured at Rathfarnham, near Dublin, in the spring of 1833, and was eventually added to the collection of Mr. T. W. Warren. The last specimen, shot in the county of Cork, came under the notice of Robert Warren, Esq., of Castlewarren, in the same county.

Habitat—Northern Africa.

ORDER III.—RASORES (SCRAPING BIRDS).

FAMILY XXIII.—COLUMBINÆ (PIGEONS).

Genus LVIII.—Columba (Pigeons).

Species 114. The Ringdove.

Columba palumbus. Linn.
Colombe ramier. Temm.

Woodquest. Cushat.

The Ringdove is the largest and most widely distributed of our native pigeons, and in the neighbourhood of Dublin occurs in considerable numbers. Beautiful in plumage, its amatory notes are among the first to announce a release from the severity of winter, and are listened to with pleasure by every resident in the country, and when heard in concert with many of our song-birds, appear as if wooing the flowery dalliance of spring.

The food of the woodquest consists of grains and seeds of all kinds, wheat, oats, barley, and particularly turnips. On account of its extensive depredations on the latter in winter, the woodquest receives little favour from the hands of the farmer; and, during that season, when they congregate in large flocks, the damage occasioned by them to the young green crops is often serious and considerable, and their capture forms a small equivalent to recompense the agriculturist for their extensive damages. On the approach of spring they break up and separate in pairs, to provide for the important task of incubation; then it is that the woodquest begins those agreeable blandishments of love for which the family of Columbinæ are remarkable:—

> "As when the ringdove by his mate alights,
> In circles each about the other wheels,
> And, murmuring, coo their fondness,"—

so the enamoured ringdove rises rapidly in the air, and, after attaining a considerable altitude, the points of the wings are brought forcibly together, producing a sharp and rather loud sound; falling gracefully through the air, he repeats his seductive wiles; or, perching on the branches of a lofty sycamore, fills the echoes of the woods with his pleasing monotony, investing many of the sombre and solemn woods

which they frequent with almost preternatural attributes. Having succeeded in selecting and winning a partner "to honour and obey," the ringdove selects a suitable situation for building, although few places come amiss, as their nests are found within a few feet from the ground in a stunted blackthorn, or some thirty feet high on the branches of the fir-tree.

The nest is a flat, plate-like structure, formed of twigs rudely woven together in a circular form, without any raised margin to prevent the young from falling out. The eggs are usually two in number, in colour pure white, and glossy in appearance. Two broods are reared during the season, the first seldom coming to maturity, from the exposed situation in which they build.

The love-note of the woodquest has, in the northern parts of Europe, been made the subject of a well-adapted and beautiful myth. It is said that a dove perched in the neighbourhood of the holy cross when the Redeemer was expiring, and, wailing its notes of sorrow, kept repeating the words, "Kyrie! Kyrie!" to alleviate the agony of His dying moments.

Some idea of the occurrence of this beautiful species about Dublin may be formed from the fact, that we have observed twenty-seven occupied nests in a demesne not many miles distant from the metropolis.

Indigenous.

Species 115.—The Rock Dove.

Columba livia. Linn.
Columbe biset. Temm.

Sea Pigeon. Rock Pigeon.

This species, very local in its distribution, is as beautifully marked as the preceding, and to it we must look for the original of our domestic pigeon. Widely differing in habits from the ringdove, which is only found inland, we might characterize the rock dove as the pigeon of the sea, from its frequenting those precipices which overhang the ocean around the coast; and although sometimes seen feeding in small flocks in the stubble and turnip fields, yet we observe them more constantly flying backwards and forwards between those huge giants of stone which defend our coasts.

Rarely occurring about Dublin, we have only observed a few pair breeding at Lambay, or occasionally a stray wan-

derer glancing past Ireland's Eye, on its way to the feeding ground at Howth, where at times they join the company of the ringdove, starling, and jackdaw.

This species it is that has received " a local habitation and a name" in the pages of the poet,—of Anacreon, of Tasso, and Ariosto,—as being the messenger employed to carry dispatches from leaguered cities, or on more tender occasions, perhaps as critical, from hearts in love.

We have remarked, when treating of the ringdove, concerning the legend attached to its call-note: to the rock dove there is none; but few who have heard its prolonged murmurings have hastily forgotten it. Thus, to ourselves it is connected with so many recollections of the beautiful that we introduce to the reader one of those scenes of quiet enjoyment at all times presented to the student of nature. Near one of those green knolls which make Lambay so picturesque on an autumnal evening, no sound disturbs the sublime and solemn stillness of the place, except the faint muttering of the waves lazily splashing the rocks below; far away towards Skerries lies a fleet of Cornish luggers, their large red sails spread out uselessly in the air; the radiance of a declining autumn sun lighting up faintly the top of Clogher Head, and drooping more mellow in its tint until it kindles the waves around the island into a bright phosphoric glow; at intervals a solitary white speck of some lagging gull sails silently upwards from the sea before us, as if unwilling to break the religious solemnity of the scene. A solitary thrush, some " Crusoe" from the main land, perched upon a fir-tree beside the old castle, seems recording to the spirit-world some legend tinged with holiness; now a loud startling report, like ordnance, booms from the rocks below, caused by the sudden entrance and exit of water into a cavern, and, ere its echoes die away, the melancholy cooing of many rock doves echoes like a response to the summons they had received. Rich as was the melody of the thrush, yet it seemed one of those songs which we may hear at all times,—but the saddened murmuring of these rock doves seemed the very essence of melody, and appeared so solemn, as to fitly harmonize with the bleak precipices that tower over the ocean, as it were, chiming an eternal response to the unison of the waves breaking upon the rugged shore of rocks below.

Indigenous.

Species 116.—The Turtle Dove.

Columba turtur. Linn.
Columbe tourterelle. Temm.

The Turtle Dove, the smallest of the Irish Columbinæ, is the only migratory visitant of its family, and occurs with us occasionally. Four specimens have passed under our notice, and amongst them a female, for the sternum of which we are indebted to Mr. Richard Glennon, and notes taken at the time of dissection. From the size of the eggs in the ovary, and from being obtained so early in June, we might, doubtless, conclude it was preparing a nest in the locality when obtained. It was shot in the vicinity of Ovoca, in the county of Wicklow.

Though the smallest, it is also the most beautiful of the species, and is possessed of the same harmless habits that so much distinguish the rock dove. The eggs are of a pure white, glossy and satin-like, resembling those of the preceding species, but smaller in size.

Habitat—Northern Africa.

Family XXIV.—Phasianidæ (Pheasants).

Genus LIX.—Phasianus (Pheasants).

Species 117.—The Common Pheasant.

Phasianus colchicus. Linn.
Phaisan vulgaire. Temm.

The widely-spread family of the Phasianidæ is only represented in Ireland by a single species. Introduced into the country, and liberated from many preserves, the numerous progeny have spread themselves widely in the neighbourhood; and being comparatively destitute of the many enemies which destroy such numbers in the English preserves, they are more common than many persons would suppose.

It is generally believed that the original locality whence the pheasant was introduced into Europe was the banks of the Phasis (whence the name), a river of Colchis, in Asia Minor, discovered by the adventurous Argonauts. It was afterwards introduced into Greece, which, when swept by the

tide of Roman power, was eagerly secured by the conquerors to add another luxury to the magnificence of their country, where in a short period they multiplied to such an extent, that we find the Emperor Heliogabalus, in barbaric ostentation causing the lions of the amphitheatre to be fed with them. Possessing the same capacious stomach and congenial disposition with his lions, he satiated himself with the brains of 600 ostriches, and the tongues of some hundred nightingales!

The varying and resplendent hues with which this bird is covered justifies the stoical answer of the philosopher Solon. Being asked by Crœsus, the Lydian king, when in the centre of his court, and surrounded by all the gorgeous accompaniments of oriental splendour, "What sight could he behold so splendid?"—he rejoined,—"that, after regarding the glowing plumage of the pheasant, the meretricious adornments of art could never equal the magnificence of nature."

Of the common pheasant we have two varieties, one possessing a white ring on the neck, which, in the opinion of the celebrated Temminck, was originally a separate species. However, they are now known to be merely varieties, as we have found in one preserve specimens of both; which the gamekeepers remark breed freely together, and the greater proportion produced, when arrived at mature plumage, is generally destitute of the ring.

In 1299 the pheasant was introduced into England, and valued at four pence. And at the gorgeous "intronazation" of Archbishop Neville, about the year 1400, 200 "fesauntes" constituted a part. Of its introduction into Ireland we have no record, nor is it mentioned in any of the ancient chronicles of the country. We find the beauties of the pheasant extolled in many of the Provençal lays, and it was equally a favourite with the early Norman "Trouveres," from which source we obtain a glance of the ideas and customs of chivalry in that early age. The body of a peacock or pheasant, elegantly prepared, being introduced, it was customary for the assembled knights and barons to make a vow (considered an oath of the greatest solemnity) to uphold and protect the honour of their ladies; and even on more important occasions we find kings engaging their sometimes unwilling lords to vow, in a similar manner, to extend their aid in any projected warlike enterprise.*

The flesh of the pheasant is deliciously delicate, and has

* Froissart's Chronicles.

been noted by Rutty to possess additional flavour when killed by a hawk.

Its food consists of all kinds of grain, potatoes, wheat, turnips, insects, and their larvæ; and, on one occasion we discovered the remains of a field mouse in the stomach of a female.

About the middle of March the plumage of the pheasant receives additional lustre: the scarlet of his cheeks becomes more vivid, and his tail is carried more to advantage. Conscious of his present beauties, his usual skulking habits are abandoned, and he struts slowly and proudly in the covered glades of the preserve, courting the advances of the female with his amorous crowing, he is prepared to battle with any male intruder who seeks to display his rival beauties in the presence of the more sombre dressed lady.

The nest is formed in a slight hollow, and is generally covered with long grass or underwood; the eggs average from five to ten in number, and are pale green in colour. When disturbed, the pheasant occasionally emits an alarm-cry, and either rises and flies directly off, or runs with celerity to the nearest cover. Only during the brumal months the pheasant is to be found perching at night, when it affords an easy opportunity to the practised poacher. In the summer and moulting season it frequents the open covers, at night resting on the ground, an advantage considerably in favour of the prowling fox.

Few of our birds, when observed in a state of nature, appear to such advantage as the pheasant; a principal feature in its favour being the usual picturesque appearance of the vicinity which it frequents,—large woods of ancient growth, the margin of streams covered with underwood, or the borders of a meadow or shrubbery. The instant erection of the head, the brilliant eye and scarlet cheeks, and while he rapidly threads his way through the tangled underwood, the flashing of his plumage in the broken rays of the sun so bewilder the casual observer, that he can scarcely believe he has seen a pheasant until he is gone.

"See, from the brake the whirring pheasant springs,
And mounts exulting on triumphant wings.
Short is his joy—he feels the fiery wound—
Flutters in blood, and, panting, beats the ground.
Ah! what avail his glossy, varying dyes,
His purple crest and scarlet-circled eyes?
The vivid green his shining plumes enfold,
His painted wings, and breast that flames with gold!"

FAMILY XXV.—TATRAONIDÆ (GROUSE).

Genus LX.—Lagopus (Ptarmigan).

Species 118.—The Red Grouse.

Lagopus Scoticus. Selby.
Tetras rouge. Temm.

Black Cock.

This beautiful species, possessing so many claims on the notice alike of the sportsman and the naturalist, is one we might call essentially Irish. Adapted from its habits, and harmonizing with its plumage, to the solitudes of the hill-side, on which it is found, it is the representative of our heath-clad hills, as much as the eagle typifies our grey misty mountains, or the skylark the green valleys of our island.

Interesting to the naturalist from the fact of its being a species indigenous to the British Isles, found in no other country in the world, and maintaining its ground successfully against all the engines of slaughter directed against it,—the peculiarities of the grouse are so prominent that the most indifferent to the picturesque in nature must admit her beautiful adaptation in clothing the hill-side with its heather, and then placing the magnificent grouse the presiding genius of her solitudes.

Occurring in considerable plenty in those localities we have mentioned, in favourite districts it nearly equals the numbers of the strictest Highland preserves in Scotland; and, strange as it may appear to many, we may even hear to-day the lordly challenge of the grouse within a few miles of the city of Dublin, on the mountains fringing the southern side of the city. This fact is possessed of considerable interest when we remember the attraction to poachers, herdsmen, and gossoons, endowed with a most oblivious memory respecting the many wise laws duly made and enacted for the preservation of our game. Annoying as it is, we might even pardon the occasional abstraction of a "black cock" from the preserve; but when (as occurred in an instance to ourselves) we saw the eggs roasted in the hot furze ashes of the peasant's cot, it is a perfection of barbarism unfortunately occurring too often.

Easily tamed in confinement, it becomes a most agreeable pet. A male bird, at one time in the possession of T. Grier-

son, Esq., of Rathfarnham, county of Dublin, kept "watch and ward" for thirteen long years, and never allowed the "*entrée*" to any stranger without challenging as high and haughty as if he were the true chatelain of the castle. Another male bird, in the possession of W. M. Patten, Esq., became so familiar as to follow that gentleman outside the house in his walks, challenging in like manner any stranger upon the high road.

Few have heard or attached such pleasure to the wild, inspiriting call or challenge of the grouse, as the naturalist and sportsman, uttered so loud and unexpectedly as he rises, that steady indeed are the nerves of that tyro who succeeds in knocking over the first old bird that whirrs up before him, fluttering and screaming as he hurries past.

Many as are the various incidents replete with interest attendant upon grouse-shooting, occurring to the sportsman, one habit of the grouse is most beautiful,—that witnessed when the old cock runs before the dogs, his neck protruded to the utmost, and his curved wings stiffly extended like sails on either side, presenting an appearance of courageous prudence rather than natural fear.

We had once the pleasure of observing a male bird of this species in a most amusing manner. Proceeding along a mountain bridle-path closely fringed with heather, we stood to observe a place where there had been some apparent motion; suddenly up rose a scarlet-crested head, and a neck of such exceeding length as to induce the belief of a new species. Down and up again, his grouseship seemed wondering at our impudence in intruding upon his territory, until, wearied and in evident disgust, he challenged and flew off. The sound of its common cry we might syllable by the words: "Go, go, go, go back, goo back;" a remark made by all its describers. According to Macgillivray, the "gor-cock" being the bird of the Highlands, the Celt naturally imagines he recognizes Gaelic in the sound, and interprets the words "Co, co, co, co, mo chlaidh, mo chlaidh," which is "Who, who" (goes there), "my sword, my sword." If the language be really Gaelic, which we do not dispute, still the call of the grouse with us is represented as equally heroic.

Indigenous.

FAMILY XXVI.—PERDRICINÆ (PARTRIDGES).

Genus LXI.—Perdrix (Partridge).

Species 119.—The Common Partridge.

Perdrix cinerea. Linn.
Perdrix rouge. Temm.

The Partridge occurs in smaller numbers than any of our other game birds, and is now rarely or seldom seen in some localities where once it existed in considerable numbers, as in the county of Meath, we have been informed by sportsmen who remember it occurring in the greatest abundance, some thirty years since, in places where now the spring of a single covey is rarely met with. Leaving the mountain to the grouse, and the woodland glade to the pheasant, we must look for the partridge in the stubble and the pasture-field, in the vicinity of cultivation, where, usually associated with plenty, the partridge, when occurring in any numbers, confers an appearance of comfort on those cultivated districts in which alone it delights.

Pairing early, it more often selects unusual breeding sites than any other of the Rasores. One, pointed out to us in the demesne of Carton, was placed within three or four inches of a foot-path where horses and carts were hourly passing. Sheltered by an evergreen bush, the female expressed no concern when it was raised to observe her, but looked up to the intruder perfectly assured of safety, and happily the confidence she had thus placed in man was not taken advantage of, for she reared her brood successfully and in safety.

Generally choosing some site in the open stubble-field, where, exposed to the view of every enemy, from the stoat to the magpie, it is surprising how she succeeds in protecting and rearing her charge.

Perhaps the most curious and interesting of its habits are the beautiful stratagems and feints which the male makes use of to withdraw attention, whilst the poor female, with some ten or fifteen young, are hurrying from danger. When thus surprised, the male rises some six or eight feet high in the air, and drops down with a heavy motion, his wings drooping and his flight wavering, and at times even falling on the ground as if wounded, he feigns death; at all times perilling his own safety in his solicitude for the numerous little family he has succeeded in rearing so far.

When a number of partridges feeding have moved some distance off, leaving some lagging gleaner behind, we are surprised to see the speed with which he runs along the ground to join his companions, which he no sooner does than the entire covey in most cases spring into the air with a whirring sound that finds an echo in every sportsman's heart.

An allied species, the French or red-legged partridge (*perdrix rufa*), has been introduced into the country, but in almost every instance failure has been the result.

Indigenous.

Genus LXII.—Coturnix (Quail).

Species 120.—The Quail.

Coturnix vulgaris. Flem.
Caille ordinaire. Temm.

This, the smallest, best known, and most familiar of our game, is also the most common in its occurrence, and resembles the partridge in selecting the cultivated districts.

It is the most interesting of its family, from the fact of its being the only species which migrates from that "great Continent," which pours forth such a combination of form to gladden our latitudes, either with the melody of their song or the beauty of their plumage.

The quail appears, from comparing notes as regards England and our own country, to exist here in a proportion of 10 to 1; and, stranger yet, a small portion remain with us, and winter in Ireland. In summer it is so abundant in the fields, that, in the suburban streets of the city, we may constantly hear their pleasing call-notes. Differing from the rest of its family, which seldom call unless alarmed, the vicinity of the quail is always known by the constant repetition of its singularly loud note, which might be syllabled to resemble the words, "whit, whit, wheet:" or, as Mr. Thompson has correctly remarked, to resemble the words, "wet my foot, wet my foot."

So pleasing is its cry or call-note, that several pair which were exposed on the window-sill of a fishing-tackle shop on the quays attracted the greatest attention from every class, claiming a look from the barrister passing to the Law Courts in its vicinity, and receiving endless imitations from all the idle "gamins" congregated to hear them.

The eggs of the quail exceed in beauty and variety all those of our native birds; and we have on many occasions

succeeded in obtaining nests in the county of Dublin which had been set by a dog.

In Germany and Holland the quail is admired for the simple beauty of its call-note (or song, as they are pleased to term it), and it is caged and suspended from the windows of every class. In England it is fattened for the table, and we see it caged in the shops of the London poulterers, enjoying the same unenviable distinction as the ortolan,—to furnish a luxurious morsel to the epicure.

This species is believed to have been the bird sent in such countless flocks to preserve the Israelites in the Desert, both from the Mosaic account and the tradition of the Arabs, who name the quail, "salwa," and who also believe it to have had no bones, and to have been eaten whole. Transferred from Holy Writ to the Koran, we find the following passage in accordance with the above:—"And God caused manna and quails to descend upon you."*

We might scarcely wonder at its abundance there, when it occurs in such numbers in the south of Europe, that during the time of its passage across the Mediterranean, 100,000 are said to have been captured in a single day; so much so, that in Sicily half the population turn out, *en masse*, to enact a novel Sicilian vesper upon the myriads of unfortunate quails arriving upon their shores; and so lucratively do they dispose of them that the principal revenues of the Bishop of Capri is said to be derived from the proceeds.

Indigenous.

FAMILY XXVII.—OTIDÆ (BUSTARDS).

Genus LXIII.—Otus (Bustard).

Species 121.—The Little Bustard.

Otis minor. Willoughby.
Outard canepetière. Temm.

This handsomely plumaged species, with its very minute and beautiful markings, is one invested with considerable interest, from the fact of its being the only representative of

* Sale's Koran.

the great family of the ostrich and cassowary that has ever visited our shores.

Of the greatest rarity, but a single specimen has been obtained in Ireland, which occurred in August, 1833, in the county of Wicklow; it was in company with another of the same species, and both birds were associated with golden plover. The attention of the gentleman who obtained it was attracted in consequence of its singular cry or call-note.

Habitat—Northern Africa.

ORDER IV.—GRALLATORES.—(WADING BIRDS).

FAMILY XXVIII.—ARDEADÆ (HERONS).

Genus LXIV.—Ardea (Heron).

Species 122.—The Common Heron.

Ardea cinerea. Linn.
Héron cendré. Temm.
Crane. Coreisk.

We commence the great and diversive order of the waders with the most perfect type of the family, the common heron, a species possessing every attribute that attracts notice and admiration, and at the same time occurring in such numbers that it is well known to the majority of observers.

Attractive in its habits, either when standing patiently by some lone mountain lough, or wheeling past us on its ample wing from the shadow of some ancestral wood, we at all times associate the heron and his more noble pursuer, the falcon, with the palmy old days of chivalry, when the laws of a feudal age were extended to this "noble quarry" and "bird of the great flight."

Strictly preserved by statutes which each succeeding king made more severe, the heron was selected as the most noble of those birds which, from their size and power of flight, were the only desirable quarry worthy of being struck down by the belled and tasselled falcon.

From the general moist character of our island, and its numerous mountain loughs and solitary streams, the heron has considerably increased and multiplied.

Found equally at home in the most complete solitude as in the immediate vicinity of the most populous city, we may at all times discern its stately form upon the strand in the vicinity of our city at Clontarf.

Indifferent to locality, it becomes adapted to whatever place chance may lead it to. Thus we observe it on thelevel strand of the sea-shore, flapping along heavily, and pushing itself down, as it were, on the ground, stalking along slowly in search of any food left by the receding tide, or small fish appearing in the shallows, usually with its long neck carried upright, watchful against surprise. At times, as at Malahide estuary, we may observe some nine or ten standing knee-deep in the water along the embankment, apparently resting after repletion, and rising heavily and silently on the approach of every railway train. But the home the heron has essentially made its own is the retired and lonely tarn on the mountain. There, standing on a stone slightly raised above the water, it remains motionless, with the neck retracted, and the glistening eye eagerly directed downwards. Watch for an hour, and yet he stirs not. The baldcoot sails past and trumpets its curious note unheeding. A hen harrier dips into the hollow, and glances over the hill-brow. The sand martins, which have mined the hill-side above, glide silently past, but he stirs not, seeming as he were under the spell of some sprite or fairy, to remain there in *statu quo* for ever. But, pshaw! you lost him. Instantaneously, and, like a lightning flash, the bill is plunged into the water, and the next minute he is wading up and down, with his crest erect, and his golden irides more bright than ever, seeming eagerly to shake off the fatigue of his long pent-up energies, rejoicing, at the same time, at his success.

We know the flesh of the heron to be despised in our own days, yet, at a former period, it was alone reserved for the tables of kings and princes. We even find it mentioned in the annals of our own country.* At the banquets at Dublin Castle, where it appeared by the express orders of Henry II., to entertain the Irish kings who were invited, "cranes' flesh, i. e. herons," were placed before those native princes, who, surprised at its unusual appearance, were unwilling to eat until the king himself tasted some of those suspicious-looking dishes. We again find them appearing amongst the good things provided at the enthronement of George Neville, Archbishop of York, in the reign of Edward IV., and can scarcely envy the gastronomic sensations attending

* Annals of the Four Masters.

the disposal of the 400 heronshaws, which records inform us were placed upon the tables. Protected at that time by stringent laws, the person who destroyed their eggs was visited with a fine of twenty shillings, or a penalty was enforced of ten shillings if detected handling a young bird in the nest; whilst to kill the bird itself was forbidden under a penalty of one month's imprisonment.

Differing in an unusual manner from almost all the birds comprised in the order to which it belongs, the heron selects a tree for the breeding place, an arrangement which, from its length of legs and bulky form, appears eminently ridiculous. Breeding like rooks in communities, the possession of a heronry is an ornament much coveted by the owner of the ancestral wood they frequent.

Although generally difficult of approach, and distrustful in their habits, we observe them in the breeding season select the unusual vicinity of inhabited buildings, as at Malahide Castle, county of Dublin, where their nests are placed almost within bowshot of the walls.

Indigenous.

Species 123.—The Purple Heron.

Ardea purpurea. Linn.
Héron pourpré. Temm.

This rare heron has occurred in a single instance, which came under the observation of Mr. Richard Glennon in a recent state, being obtained somewhere in the neighbourhood of Carrickmacross. At one time amongst the rarities of Mr. Harrington's celebrated collection, it now graces that of Mr. Warren.

Rather thinly scattered over Europe, it occasionally appears in great numbers in France during its passage north, so much so, that on one occasion numbers were captured at Lille, having dropped from over-fatigue near the Hall of Justice, and the fosses of the fortifications.*

Habitat—Northern Africa.

Species 124.—The Egret.

Ardea garsetta. Linn.
Héron garsette. Temm.

The Egret, another heron, alike remarkable for rarity and beauty, has only occurred in some five or six instances in

* Ornithologie Européenne.

Ireland. Very beautiful in plumage, which is of a spotless white colour, with two long pendant feathers falling gracefully from the head, we must regret its less frequent occurrence in our island.

Habitat—Southern Europe.

Species 125.—The Squacco Heron.

Ardea comata. Linn.
Héron crabier. Temm.

The Squacco Heron is of equal rarity as the purple heron, and, like that species, has also occurred in one instance, in the vicinity of Youghal, during the summer of 1849, and which we had the pleasure of examining through the kindness of Mr. Samuel Moss, of Youghal. For the same reasons as the preceding, the habits of this species are but little known, from its rarity, and the difficulty of observing it in its native country.

Habitat—Northern Africa.

Genus LXV.—Botaurus (Bittern).

Species 126.—The Common Bittern.

Botaurus stellaris. Selby.
Héron grand butor. Temm.
Bog Drum.

The Common Bittern, a species yielding to none of the birds we have already described, either in beauty of plumage or interest in its history, is now rarely or seldom observed in our island, where at one time it existed in considerable numbers. Its disappearance may be easily accounted for in the drainage and improvement of the many morasses and bogs which had previously furnished it with shelter and a home.

Differing in the appearance of its plumage from the gray and white shades peculiar to the herons, we see in this species that beautiful blending of several dark colours the characteristic of the bitterns. Also, unlike the heron in its habits, the bittern is a skulking, close-lying species, of shy and retired habits during the day, and only regaining its activity on the approach of twilight.

Invested with the privileges of the heron, in the olden time the bittern ranked as another of the birds of the "great flight." As the meaning may be somewhat ambiguous, we

transcribe Turberville's elucidation :—" There is yet another kynde of flight to the fielde which is called the great flight, as to the cranes, wild geese, bustard, birde of paradise, bittours, shovelars, hearons, and many other such like (1611)." Protected also by similar statutes as the heron, one year's imprisonment, and a forfeiture of eightpence for each egg, was the punishment awarded to those who destroyed or took away the eggs of the " bittour."

Like that bird, its flesh was held in the highest estimation, and, becoming expensive as a luxury, it graced the tables of the princely and magnificent, and was even valued at one shilling during the reign of Henry VIII. Attracting more attention than any other species comprised in the entire order, by an extraordinary booming noise peculiar to the male, so deep and solemn in intensity that it may be often heard clearly and distinctly beyond the circuit of a mile, it is thus that the bittern makes few friends, as that class in whose vicinity its occurrence is most frequent, unable satisfactorily to account for its strange powers, unanimously arrived at the conclusion that the bittern is not " canny ;" indeed, we may scarcely express surprise at such a decision when we see writers sagely explaining how the bittern placed its bill in the cavity of a reed, and thus produced the booming sound :—

> " The bittern knows his time, with bill engulfed,
> To shake the sounding marsh."

Thus, a puzzle to all, the bittern is invested with many supernatural attributes, and the peasant, on a dim twilight evening, hearing a sound without a name, has no resource but the banshee, and, accordingly, in the harmless booming of the bittern we doubtless recognise the first origin of the wailing banshee,—

> " For in the bittern's distant shriek
> I heard unearthly voices speak."

The bittern has now become so rare, it is but seldom observed, although occasionally, as in December, 1850, we saw eight specimens obtained from various counties in the course of a single week.

In Goldsmith's time they must have been of usual occurrence, when he remarked—

> " Along the glades, a solitary guest,
> The hollow-sounding bittern guards her nest ; "

—at the present time it is a matter of the greatest doubt whether the bittern ever nidifys in our island.

We may scarcely wonder at the fear instilled by this species into the minds of the uneducated, when we see in it the bird of an offended Deity, selected to typify more perfectly the desolation He has caused to fall upon those mighty cities which had rebelled against His will. Thus—

> "When at evening, o'er the swampy plain,
> The bittern's boom comes far:
> Distinct, in darkness seen,
> Above the horizon's lingering light,
> Rose the near ruins of old Babylon."

Remarked, during the breeding season, for its peculiar spiral ascending flight in the air, it is to this it is indebted for the beautiful poetic name bestowed upon it by the Latins, "Heron of the Stars," or "Starmounter," an idea quaint in its beauty, as is the German "Earthspurner" for the skylark. With Aristotle, however, it was different, as he remarked that those birds were such lazy sluggards as to have been at one time slaves, and afterwards metamorphosed into bitterns.

When wounded the bittern presents no ordinary antagonist, and woe to the unhappy dog sent to retrieve the wounded quarry.

Even the sportsman momentarily recoils when he perceives the keen, undaunted look and sharp claws of the wounded bittern, its yellow eye glistening with anger, and watching for a stroke to deprive its enemy of sight.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Species 127.—The American Bittern.

Botaurus lentiginosus. Mont.
Héron lentigineux. Temm.

With this bittern we have another instance in which we find an occasional wanderer from the great American continent, appearing upon our coasts in a similar manner with the American cuckoo and belted kingfisher. Only appearing on our shores on one occasion, it frequented some sedge-bottoms in the vicinity of Armagh, where it was observed by the son of the distinguished astronomer, Dr. T. Romney Robinson, who succeeded in obtaining it, and at once remarked it as not possessing the usual wariness so characteristic of the common bittern.

Of its fitness for the table we have the testimony of Dr.

Robinson to this effect: "That the bird was very fat and very good eating, for we roasted it." The skin was, however, presented to the Belfast Museum by the same gentleman.*

Occurring in North America in considerable numbers, this bird occupies the place of the common species in the European Continent. Similar in its habits, its describers have differed in their opinions respecting the booming noise which is so remarkable in our own,—some ornithologists denying it the power, which others have as strenuously insisted on.

Habitat—North America.

Species 128.—The Little Bittern.

Botaurus minutus. Linn.
Héron blongios. Temm.

Having been obtained more often than any of the rarer herons we have described, this elegant little species is a perfect miniature of the others, but still uniting all the beauty of plumage and form so much distinguishing the birds of its family.

Occurring in six or seven instances over various parts of the island, one or two specimens were obtained in the vicinity of Sandymount marsh, near Dublin, and another as far west as Galway.

Exchanging in captivity many of the habits which add grace to it in its wild state, we see it in confinement skulking or walking lazily about, with the neck so much retracted that the head appears rising from the shoulders without the slightest semblance of a neck; occasionally also, in its wild state, indulging in a variety of attitudes, one of which is exceedingly curious: perching on a bough, the head, feet, and body forming almost a perpendicular line, it remains immovable for a considerable time in the same position.† We have also the authority of Audobon, who, having specimens in confinement, remarks that they were fed upon small shell-fish and strips of pork, and constantly exhibited their scansorial powers in attempting to escape from the windows, as they would climb with ease from the floor to the top of the curtains by means of their feet and claws.

Habitat—Northern Africa.

* Thompson. † Ornithologie Européenne.

Genus LXVI.—Nycticorax (Night Heron).

Species 129.—The Night Heron.

Nycticorax gardenii. Selby.
Bihoreau a manteau noir. Temm.

The Night Heron, or, to follow its generic name more correctly, the night raven, so denominated from its hoarse, croaking cry, is a species of extreme rarity, and we admit it to a place in our Fauna from a few specimens captured in the country at different periods of the year. Two specimens in adult and immature plumage have come under our own observation,—one, a very beautiful male specimen, obtained in the county of Louth, and preserved in the collection of Robert J. Montgomery, Esq.; the other, in immature plumage, purchased by Dr. Ball for the Dublin University Museum.

In habits, perhaps, more nocturnal than the other species of the Ardeadæ, it frequents marshes, or any locality where sufficient herbage will admit of its skulking unobserved in the daytime; and in North America, where it is frequent, it is known as the "qua bird." Breeding in flocks in the vicinity of swamps and cane-brakes, the flesh of the young birds is esteemed equal in flavour to pigeons, so that they are eagerly sought after by the settlers and their other enemies, the raptorial birds.

Habitat—Northern Africa.

Genus LXVII.—Ciconia (Stork).

Species 130.—The White Stork.

Ciconia alba. Brisson.
Cicogne blanc. Temm.

We might class the stork amongst the rarest and yet the best known of the many rare visitants we have already seen comprised in the great family of the Ardeadæ. Only occurring in two instances in Ireland, the first of which was obtained in the county of Cork, in 1846, and which we had the pleasure of seeing in the collection of Dr. Harvey of that city; and the second obtained in the vicinity of a marsh near the sea-shore in Wexford, during the autumn of the same year.

Protected and preserved in continental towns, we see the stork familiarly standing on the housetop and at dusk sailing over the half marshy fields in the vicinity of the dykes. In-

deed, in a similar manner as we observe the more gigantic members of this family walking completely at home amidst the population in the warm climates of Southern Asia, we may also see the stork in Holland and Belgium performing the duties of a scavenger, at early dawn flying over the streets, and stopping to pick up whatever garbage may appear.

Very common in temperate Europe, the stork occasionally appears in considerable flocks whilst performing its migrations; and at times becoming so fatigued that, according to M. Hollandre, they appeared in hundreds in a wood between Gorze and Rezonville, and were so unable to proceed that nearly forty were killed, and numbers taken with the hand.*

Possessing great affection for its young, instances have occurred where the house in which the stork had its nest accidentally caught fire, and the parent, unable to save its offspring, perished with them.

This species, although not possessing that compactness of plumage which we see in the other herons, and not, perhaps, of so graceful an appearance, yet few of the birds admitted to a place in our Fauna have the colours more chastely disposed than the stork: its crimson-red bill and legs contrasting beautifully with the spotless white plumage of the body, and the glossy black of the wing-covers.

On many occasions we have seen the stork strung up like a feathered felon in the London markets, and could not help contrasting the position of the birds there and in Holland, where we see them tamed, and walking amidst the purchasers in the public markets.

Habitat—Northern Africa.

Genus LXVIII.—Platalea (Spoonbill).

Species 131.—The White Spoonbill.

Platalea leucorodia. Linn.
Spatule blanche. Temm.

In the spoonbill we again see the white colour of the plumage similar to the stork and egret, which it also resembles in the rarity of its occurrence.

Attracting more attention for the curious spoon-shaped bill than others of the family not possessing such a remarkable appearance, is, perhaps, the reason why the spoonbill has been obtained in a greater proportion than the others, as no less than twelve† have been shot and preserved in various

* Faune de la Moselle. † Thompson.

collections over Ireland. Strange, also, from appearing in small flocks, as many as seven birds have been observed frequenting marshes in the county of Wexford; but all the birds composing the flock exhibited such wariness as not to admit of sufficient approach to obtain one. Observed also so far to the west as Kerry, where three specimens were obtained out of a flock of five,—on the strand of Rogerstown, county of Dublin, two were remarked in company, one of which fell to the gun of Mr. Patrick Boylan, of this city, by whom it was presented to Mr. T. W. Warren, of Blessington-street.

In habits nearly similar to the preceding species, the spoonbill occasionally becomes remarkably tame in confinement.

A male bird, at one time in the possession of an ornithological friend,* became so familiar as to proceed up stairs and enter the breakfast-room regularly during meal hours, and appropriate to itself, at all seasons, the hearth-rug, where it would nestle down and enjoy the warmth of the fire. Having at one time been scalded by accident, it ever after evinced the utmost horror of the tea-urn,—rising quickly from its resting position, and walking away indignantly, not returning until its enemy had been displaced, when it resumed its position. If annoyed by young children, it walked quickly round the room and selected an unoccupied chair, if at a distance from the wall, and, perching upon it, would take bread from the hand, or bread and milk in a teacup. Its usual resting-place was the top of an old pump in the centre of an outyard, on which perch it would often remain motionless for hours.

Not an uninteresting circumstance connected with the spoonbill is the immense number of eggs which we see in the stores of the dealers in London and Paris. In the latter city, during the summer of 1851, we remarked nearly 200 in the boxes of a single dealer.

Breeding at a remote period in the marshes of England, it is now only known as an extremely rare visitant, although incorrectly remarked by Degland as breeding at the present time in considerable numbers in the fens of Lincolnshire.

Habitat—Northern Africa.

* Mr. D. S. Bryan.

Genus LXIX.—Grus (Crane).

Species 132.—The Common Crane.

Grus cinerea. Bechstein.
Grue cendré. Temm.

We now come to the noblest-looking of the many birds we have described. Although all, from the heron and bittern to the spoonbill, claim attention, either from their connexion with the chase, their curious booming cries, or some remarkable development in their appearance, yet they become deficient of interest when the majestic crane is introduced to our notice.

Of the most commanding stature, the crane stands nearly four feet in height, with that great length of limb and neck which reminds us of the ostrich and cassowary.

Connected alike with scriptural lore as it has been with the offerings of the poets of Southern Europe, with all a favourite—from Homer to the days of Dante and Calderon—we see their migrations the same to-day, in their beautiful regularity, as they were in those ages when the Great Giver said:—"The crane and the swallow knoweth the appointed time of their coming."

Extremely fearful and watchful, these migrations are performed in large flocks, at an immense altitude in the air, and so cautious are they, that on perceiving their enemy man, even at a great distance, the entire flock utter loudly their strange alarm-cries.*

A considerable doubt exists respecting the previous occurrence of this species in our island, as they have been supposed by many to have been plentiful at a remote period, and at last to have disappeared in the same manner that the giant deer and wolf became extinct.

We have the authority of Giraldus de Barri, who mentions them as plentiful, and that flocks consisting of a hundred birds were a common sight. He again introduces it to our notice when remarking the barbarous ideas and the ignorance of the Irish princes, in expressing their repugnance and disgust against cranes' meat when presented before them by the king! Again, when speaking of the Church of St. Benean, he describes it as situated in the mountains, where cranes, grouse (gruta), and other birds, built their nests in great numbers, on account of the security of the locality.

* Ornithologie Europeenne.

Whether the bird indicated by Giraldus, and other writers of his time, be the same as the subject under consideration, is a matter of considerable doubt. Although the remark of the flocks in which they were seen induces us to believe them to have been cranes, and not common herons, which are still erroneously known over the entire island as cranes, and to which the majority of persons pertinaciously attach that unmeaning name,—we should also recollect, that the crane at that period was widely spread over the extensive marshes of England, as even in Henry VI.'s time we find a forfeiture declared of twenty pence for each egg of the crane taken or destroyed; and again, at Archbishop Neville's feast 204 goodly cranes were served, and were valued so highly as sixteen pence each. At the present time the crane has only occurred in some five or six instances, two specimens of which, obtained in the county of Cork, we had the pleasure of examining.

Habitat—Northern Africa.

FAMILY XXIX.—IBIDINÆ (IBISES).

Genus LXX.—Ibis (Ibis).

Species 133.—The Glossy Ibis.

Ibis falcinellus. Linn.
Ibis falcinelle. Temm.

Not inferior in interest to any of the preceding species is the ibis, the only representative in our country of the wide-spread and beautiful family to which it belongs.

Like the spoonbill, it has chiefly occurred in autumn and winter, and like that bird also in nearly similar proportions.

One specimen of the ibis, obtained by Mr. P. Boylan, and presented to the Dublin Natural History Society's Museum, has come under our notice. Few of the wanderers from other lands, occurring either by contrary winds, or the caprice of the individual, have been so hallowed by time as this species, being one of those birds selected as worthy of adoration by the ancient Egyptians; and although the present species is not the white or sacred ibis which was in all cases honoured by the priests of Egypt, yet the body was frequently embalmed, and in some instances the eggs, which, after a lapse of some thousand years, present little variation from recent specimens. Well known to the Egyptians of the present day, both species

have received the appellation of "Abou menzel," literally signifying "Father Sickle-bill," from the bill being curved like that implement. The beautiful scarlet ibis, so much admired in most museums, and which occurs plentifully along the great rivers of tropical America, is also a member of this family.

Habitat—Northern Africa.

FAMILY XXX.—SCOLOPACIDÆ (SNIPES).

Genus LXXI.—Numenius (Curlew).

Species 134.—The Curlew.

Numenius arquata. Latham.
Courlis cendré. Temm.

Whaup.

The Curlew is one of our most common and widely distributed birds, frequenting the sea-shore in large flocks, and feeding on marine insects, mollusca, crustacea, and larvæ, for which it probes the soft muddy ooze with its long and admirably adapted bill.

In Dublin Bay the immense flocks of curlew afford considerable attraction to the shore sportsman, both from their changing evolutions when on the wing, and the fine, bold, spirited call-note of the species. Watchful and vigilant, we see no other shore bird exhibit the same suspicious habits as the curlew, and, what annoys the sportsman is that, not content with its own safety, it extends its protection over all the flocks feeding in its vicinity. Possessing the loudest call-note of all our grallatorial birds, no flock is so adventurous as to remain feeding after the shrill, startling whaup of the curlew has echoed along the shore.

Of great interest in its habits, the curlew enlivens and makes cheerful whatever coast it frequents, no matter how desolate may have been its previous appearance. Thus do we see it in our own Bay during autumn and winter, occurring along the entire shore range from Clontarf to Malahide, in flocks of the greatest abundance. Feeding together, they present the most diversified appearance in their attitudes upon the mud or ooze. But yet so easily alarmed are they that the sportive leap of a wanton fish, the rustling of a leaf blown past upon the strand, or, when feeding during night-time, the snapping of a gun in their neighbourhood, serves to alarm

the entire flock, which at once rises with that peculiar lightness and ease so eminently possessed by the curlew, and wing rapidly their flight from the way of danger, each bird uttering the loud prolonged "courlieu," or the harsh and guttural "whaup," so indicative of danger, and which is heard so beautifully modulated both by sound and distance. Never to be approached upon an open shore, the only chance possessed by the shooter is by concealment in the vicinity of their flight, or when observed waiting the falling of the tide in fields bordering the shore, the proximity of the hedgerow allows an approach to some portion of the flock.

Much as we admire the wild beauty of its call-note, it is never heard to more advantage than when passing to its feeding stations along the shore at night-time, uttered singly in long echoing whistles, with another occasional call-note more hurried, which serves to bring in stragglers to the main flock. They impart one of the most beautiful of the many attractions which nature has so profusely scattered for our enjoyment. Sometimes also we hear amid the deep silence of the night some old veteran curlew, which has become a very Nestor in its precautions for safety, and its voice a deep bass, from years of constant whauping, utter a long-drawn whistle, so intense in expression, loudness, and solemnity, that even coast-guards stationed in the vicinity have left their domiciles to observe if the sea was burdened with a wreck. Even in our own vicinity, at Rob's Wall, near Malahide, the guard in custody of the Martello Tower represented to us having at times started from his bed to ascertain the cause of such an unearthly whistle:

> "Soothed by the murmurs of the sea-beat shore,
> His dun-grey plumage floating to the gale,
> The curlew blends his melancholy wail
> With those hoarse sounds the rushing waters pour."

Feeding upon the shore in winter, during autumn the curlew lives for a short time upon seeds and berries, so much so that we have had the pleasure of examining, with Mr. Glennon, the stomachs of curlews, on two different occasions, which were entirely filled with blackberries, the action of which had not only discoloured the intestines, but changed the natural colour of the bones to a light purplish hue.

In some request as food, the curlew is often exposed in the markets, and seldom fails in producing the average value affixed by the old adage upon it:

> "Be she white, or be she black,
> She carries ten pence on her back."

Towards the approach of spring the great flocks which we had seen during winter, apparently thinned and diminished in number, separate into detached bodies, and depart inland to seek a suitable place for nidification.

On some barren and desolate moor, tenanted by the grouse, the moor harrier, and lizard, the curlew prepares an artless nest on the ground, in a dry tuft of grass or rushes, lined with withered herbage. Sometimes it is formed in a natural hollow or depression, smoothed by the bird and lined with leaves, where the eggs are deposited, four in number, of a pale green, blotched with brown. During the breeding season these solitary tracts frequented by the curlew appear replete with animation. From early dawn to the last hour of twilight their incessant screaming, and repeated motion, afford a relief to the otherwise changeless and dull monotony of the scene; on the nest being approached, the male and female assail the obnoxious intruder with noisy screams, beating at him with quivering wings, and, that failing, run and skulk before, in hopes of decoying and deluding him.

The male curlew in spring has a habit analogous to the bleating of the snipe, which is usually performed at early dawn. Rising slowly in the air, and sailing in easy flight, and at times rapidly descending, the amorous curlew utters at intervals the loud, shrill, quivering whistle peculiar to the breeding season; and at daybreak the moving forms of curlew, rendered large and indistinct by the fog, the oft-repeated whistles of many birds on the wing at the same time, the challenging of the mountain grouse, and the hoarse croak of welcome from the raven sailing to its foray in the valley, form one of those little episodes intrinsically so trifling in appearance, but yet replete with such interest, to greet the observer of nature.

Indigenous.

Species 135.—The Whimbrel.

Numenius pheopus. Linn.
Courlis corlieu. Temm.

Maybird. Jack Curlew. Little Whaup.

The Whimbrel, or, as it is more usually termed in Ireland, the Maybird, from its appearing during that month in greater abundance than at any other time, occurs in much smaller numbers than our common species, and is only to be found upon

our shores whilst performing its usual migration to and from its breeding stations.

Appearing generally upon the eastern coast range about the end of April or the first week of May, they remain but a short time to recruit their strength, and then disappear. Returning about July or August, the whimbrel move down from their northern breeding haunts in small flocks, averaging from five to twenty, accompanied by their young, both of which, from their small size in comparison with the common curlew, are generally believed to be the young of that bird.

Few species might attract more attention from their remarkable migrations than this species, illustrating in such a beautiful manner the admirable instinct which the Creator has given them, all leaving at a certain season their place of abode, and passing, like a feathered exodus, so many strange lands, to reach at last a locality where their further flight is limited, there to perform the duties of incubation, and after these cares are over, to return again in increased numbers to the more favoured land they had left. Yearly returning to those breeding stations, they exemplify in a beautiful manner the Providence that guides them so unerringly.

Habitat—Western Europe.

Genus LXXII.—Scolopax (Snipe).

Species 136.—The Woodcock.

Scolopax rusticola. Linn.
Becasse ordinaire. Temm.

The Woodcock is the largest and finest-looking in appearance of the true Scolopacidæ frequenting our island, and is a species widely distributed during winter, occurring in favourite localities in much greater numbers than when similarly situated in England or Scotland, the obvious reason of which is the admirable adaptation of the marshy nature of the country to their habits.

Shy and retired, we seldom observe the woodcock, like the majority of our grallatorial birds, whilst feeding or flying to any favourite haunt, which we may partly account for by its semi-nocturnal habits, as during the day we in most cases observe them haunting close-fringed brakes, sides of glens, and the outskirts of woods and plantations, where they remain sluggish and indifferent until the approach of twilight, when

they regain activity, sally out and search actively for food, which in a great measure consists of worms and insects, obtained by the bill being thrust into the earth, often so far that we repeatedly observe specimens in the markets of the city, with the feathers of the forehead marked and crusted with the dried soil.

Generally arriving in Ireland about the middle of October, it is to be found for a few days in the vicinity of the shore, weak and wasted in condition after its long flight, and at times so much fatigued as to have been captured by the hand —unable to fly.

From its rarity in Ireland during the summer months, it was long a doubtful question whether the woodcock remained to breed. Of this fact we have now direct testimony from many parts of the country, where an occasional pair has been known to remain and nidify.

On the demesne of the Earl of Roden, Tollymore Park, the woodcock has become resident during summer, remaining in considerable numbers, and bringing up their young. It is supposed the woodcock rears but a single brood during the year, yet on one occasion we had the satisfaction of seeing a second recorded, from having received the leaves composing the nest and four eggs, on the 2nd of July, 1851, which were forwarded from Tollymore Park by his Lordship's orders, for our collection.

Occasionally remaining to breed in France, we are told by Degland* of a woodcock being shot near Lyons, by a gamekeeper, who on taking up the bird discovered three young hidden beneath the wing of the parent, and which had been killed by the same discharge which deprived the female of life. The same author also mentions the extraordinary rapidity with which the woodcock runs on the ground, so nimbly as to avoid the dogs of the chasseur who have started it.

As with many other migratory birds, the occurrence of the woodcock early or late in the season gives rise to many prognostics respecting good or bad weather to those versed in such matters:—

> "The woodcock's early visit, and abode
> Of long continuance in our temperate clime,
> Foretells a liberal harvest."

The woodcock occurs in such numbers in Ireland that in good covers a couple of guns may procure as many birds in a

* Ornithologie Européenne.

few weeks as the best covers in England or Scotland would afford during the entire season—so much so that, in a southern county, for a considerable wager, fifty couples were bagged in one day, and by a single gun,—this, too, perfectly well authenticated in the newspapers of the day.

Resembling the great majority of night-feeding birds, the woodcock often betrays its proximity, when in cover, by its large staring eye: a fact taken cognizance of by Hudibras in the accompanying couplet:

> "Fools are found by looking wise
> As men find woodcocks by their eyes."

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Species 137.—The Great Snipe.

Scolopax major. Linn.
Becassine double. Temm.

The Great Snipe is a bird of rather unusual occurrence in our island, and we can only reckon an average of one specimen obtained for every three or four winters.

Found either in pairs or single birds, it has obtained the name of solitary or silent snipe, from its unwillingness to cry or utter any alarm note when disturbed. A gamekeeper on the property of Mr. Herbert, of Muckruss, in Kerry, has obtained this bird on two occasions, and named them woodcock snipe, from their large size, heavy flight, and fanned tail whilst flying.

More frequently observed during autumn, an adult female in our collection was obtained in the county of Kildare, in 1849. We might also remark the perfect accordance of its Irish name with its habits and appearance, "cnououn ceouȝh beȝ," the little woodcock.

This species may be easily distinguished from the common snipe by its larger size, sixteen feathers in the tail (fourteen in the common species), and the marking on the abdomen being closer, and more resembling the barring of the woodcock.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Species 138.—The Sabine Snipe.

Scolopax sabinii. Vigors.
Becassine sabine. Temm.

This rare snipe, so extremely curious in its distribution, has been a complete puzzle to its describers, as we know of no other species in the world so restricted in occurrence.

Of well-defined distinctive marks to admit it to the specific qualification of a species, the sabine snipe has never occurred in any instance outside the range of the British Islands. In England some three or four instances are noted, but in Scotland it has never been observed, whilst in Ireland as many as fourteen authenticated instances have occurred, in various counties, during autumn and winter. In the fine collection of birds in the University Museum, as many as four of these rare snipe are preserved, all of which were obtained by the assiduity of Dr. R. Ball, who collected them.

In the course of Mr. R. Glennon's practice he has preserved no less than six of this species, which were familiarly known to the persons who obtained them as "black snipe."

Regarding its breeding haunts and habits all ornithologists are totally ignorant.

Habitat—unknown.

Species 139.—The Common Snipe.

Scolopax gallinago. Linn.
Becassine ordinaire. Temm.

Heather Bleat.

The Common Snipe is a species so well known in Ireland that few are entirely unacquainted with it.

Interesting to the naturalist as it is familiar to the sportsman, it is scattered over the island in an abundance to which the sister kingdom can offer no comparison.

Indifferent as to locality during winter, the snipe frequents any piece of water, open drain, or marshy field, where it can obtain food; at times in such proximity to cities that we have known some hundreds to be taken collectively during many years' observation around the outskirts of the city of Dublin.

Retiring inland during summer, the snipe enlivens every locality in which it nidifies with its curious habits, which bear a close resemblance to those of the peewit in the grace and beauty of aerial motion. Ascending high in the air, with a half circular, sweeping flight, varied by an occasional dip downwards in the air, it performs the most extravagant variations on the wing, all accompanied with that peculiar drumming noise which has obtained for it the name of heather bleat, which in every country has been similarly connected with a goat's bleat, as the Scotch, Irish, and Welsh names for it signify the air goat, and it is similarly distinguished in Continental Europe.

Most naturalists are in doubt respecting the manner in which this singular sound is produced; some arguing in favour of its being caused by the peculiar downward quivering of the wings, which, striking against the air, produce the sound; others have as plausibly maintained it to be the note of the bird when sounded at a considerable elevation.

We frequently have observed these birds perform their beautiful nuptial flight, and heard their drumming sound, and believe it to be produced both by the voice of the bird and the action of the wings at the same time.

Valued by the sportsman for the variety of flight presented to him as each bird rises to his gun, snipe-shooting is, on this account, a favourite sport. Although not equal in dignity to grouse or woodcock-shooting, yet, where snipe occur in numbers, few sports are more exhilirating. Tyros are deterred by the fancied difficulty of its flight; a little attention and practice, however, to the peculiar turn or twist which the snipe invariably makes when flying off, is alone requisite to produce a good snipe-shot.

Distributed according to the character of the locality, snipe are more numerous in moist countries. In the county of Cork fifty brace have been shot with a single gun, in one day, an occurrence which no preserve of equal extent in England or Scotland could produce.

More subject to variety than any of the Scolopacidæ, we repeatedly see the snipe with patches of various colours on the plumage and wings, and sometimes one of a cream-colour attracts notice as a "white snipe." One in this state of plumage was presented to our collection by Mr. Glennon, of Dublin, having been shot in company with a common snipe at the Bog of Allen, county of Kildare.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Species 140.—The Jack Snipe.

Scolopax gallinula. Linn.
Becassine sourde. Temm.

This species, the smallest in size and most beautiful in plumage of all the elegantly-marked birds comprised in this family, is, however, of rare occurrence. In the markets of the city its proportion is about 1 to 10. It arrives with the first of our winter visitants, and is one of the last to depart. Having observed specimens obtained in the months of June, July, and August, in the rich plumage of the nuptial season (in one of which the feathers of the breast were wanting), it is

not improbable that, like the woodcock, it may breed with us in limited numbers.

More sluggish and indolent in habits than the common snipe, the Jack exhibits few of the watchful characteristics of that bird, but in its unwillingness to take wing often allows one to approach within a few feet before attempting to rise, and then, selecting a suitable place to pitch, rising in the air, it drops like an arrow to the ground; in no case ever venturing to take wing for a long flight until after being disturbed some three or four different times.

A curious idea is possessed by many sportsmen, as well as by the market dealers, respecting this species, all believing it to be the male of the common snipe; distinguishing it by the appellation of Jack, as they give the other the name of Jill snipe.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Genus LXXIII.—Limosa (Godwit).

Species 141.—The Black-tailed Godwit.

Limosa melanura. Selby.
Barge à queue noir. Temm.
Red Godwit. Whelp.

This fine-looking species is an autumnal and winter visitant to our coasts, and only occurs in very limited numbers; at times their occurrence on the eastern shores of the island is of great rarity; although, during some years, they are found scattered in considerable numbers along the sea-coast about Dublin, and in such plenty that, in the autumn of 1849, they were exposed for sale by the hawkers of wild fowl in the city, tied together in long strings like the more common snipe and plover.

Few species exhibit a more varied change of plumage, at different seasons of the year, than the birds comprised in the present genus. The beautiful and showy plumaged bird of the summer exchanging its gay tints, and adapting its appearance to the rigours of winter from the many varying hues of reddish-orange and yellowish-red to the more unobtrusive shades of pale gray and white.

On one occasion, when observing a flock of sea-birds on the coast at Malahide, during the autumn of 1852, with the aid of a pocket telescope, fifteen godwits were discerned occupying a portion of an exposed sandbank, and awaiting in com-

posed dignity for the main shore to be uncovered. The assistance of the glass, and a previous acquaintance with the appearance of the species, enabled us to identify the godwits composing this group, looking so strange, with the neck retracted and the form huddled up as if perishing from the effects of cold. Whilst they remained, nine of the beautiful oyster plovers alighted, and commenced circling the edge of the bank in an even line, running in file, and attentively examining every little object uncovered by the receding tide.

Strangely differing in association, we have also seen numbers of these beautiful godwits cribbed and confined in the London markets, where, crowded together in cages, they are fattened for the table. Pitiable in the appearance of their resigned tameness, they seemed to bear their captivity with the same quiet manner which distinguishes them in their wild state.

Habitat—Western Europe.

Species 142.—The Common Godwit.

Limosa rufa. Briss.
Barge rousse. Temm.

Red Godwit. Yarwhelp. Godwyn.

This is another handsome species, although not possessing the more elegant proportions of the melanura, or the same brilliancy of plumage. Common on the coast during winter, we observe it in the immediate vicinity of the city, frequenting the shore where the strand is soft and oozy, probing and searching the mud for insect food and marine worms with their long, admirably adapted beak.

During the severity of winter we see them congregated with knots and dunlins, frequenting the "slob" which the intensity of the frost had not succeeded in hardening.

They are well known on the coast from their familiar cry, resembling the syllable "whelp," which is invariably uttered when alarmed before taking wing.

On the strand in the vicinity of Baldoyle, much frequented by various shore-birds, we were once gratified by the observance of a large flock, composed of nearly three hundred godwits. They exhibited much tameness, feeding on a muddy bank within some few yards of a mill situated there, the creaking sound of whose machinery echoed loudly, unnoticed by them. Their appearance was interesting in the ex-

treme,—no two birds in the same position or attitude; some actively engaged probing for food, and others running in different directions searching for a suitable place to commence operations; the great portion of the flock enjoying their ease, standing upon one leg, with the bill completely buried in the plumage of the back.

In summer the plumage bears a resemblance in its reddish colour to the last; it is, however, seldom observed on our shores at that season, taking its departure to northern latitudes for the breeding season.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Genus LXXIV.—Machetes (Ruff).

Species 143.—The Ruff.

Machetes pugnax. Cuv.
Combattant variable. Temm.

Reeve.

The Ruff is the most remarkable in appearance and curious in habits of our occasional migrating shore-birds. Occurring with us in very limited numbers, it is seldom obtained unless a chance specimen forwarded to the markets in the city; which, in most instances, is in the plumage of the female or young, very rarely occurring with the beautiful ruff encircling the neck, for which the male bird has obtained the name. Of extreme rarity in that stage, four or five specimens are the utmost we can reckon as having occurred in Ireland.

Remarkable for the pugnacity of its disposition, it has been separated by Cuvier from the more sociable sandpipers into a separate genus, characterized "Machetes," the literal translation signifying Fighter. The peculiarity of the ruff is remarked during the breeding season when the males, adorned with the long sweeping plumes which form their nuptial attraction, and which spring from the plumage of the neck, at that period assemble upon any spot of rising ground contiguous to the stations where they intend to nidify. Standing in proximity to each other, they watch every movement to act as an excuse for contention; this obtained, the head is instantly lowered, and the large ruff thrown forward round the head, both birds flying upwards at the same time, and striking with the action of a domestic cock. The whole time the females or reeves enjoy the admirable graces of the combatants,

doubtful of the success which will give them a lord, as they permit the victor alone to associate with them. Even in confinement this pugnacity is continued, and their appearance might be amusingly contrasted with the godwits similarly caged at the Leadenhall market, but separately confined in long boxes. The placid stand and an occasional piping note from the timid godwits, contrasted with the ruffs, who seem in their pugnacity to have adapted for their motto, "Toujours pres" to do battle with or without cause; displaying also in confinement their favourite attitude of standing upon one leg, they are so lazy, that, when wishing to move forward, they hop upon the one leg rather than put down the other, a fact likewise noted by Degland.* At the termination of the breeding season the males lose the sexual plumage which adds so strangely to their appearance, and change to the more subdued tints of the female.

A remarkable fact is the colour of the ruff on the neck, two specimens being seldom observed exactly similar in appearance. From two specimens which we obtained in the month of July, 1850, from the neighbourhood of the Bog of Allen, it is not improbable that in some rare instances this species may remain and nidify.

Habitat—Europe.

Genus LXXV.—Totanus (Tattlers).

Species 144.—The Spotted Redshank.

Totanus fuscus. Jard.
Chevalier arlequin. Temm.

Spotted Snipe. Dusky Sandpiper.

This handsome species is of the greatest rarity, and has only been obtained in a single authenticated instance, obtained, too, by a describer worthy of its rarity, the late William Thompson, Esq., of Belfast, from whose work on the "Natural History of Ireland" we transcribe:—

"When a very young sportsman, and out shooting in Hollywood rabbit-warren, bordering Belfast Bay, on the morning of the 22nd of August, 1823, I perceived at a distance a solitary bird, whose call resembled that of a redshank, but was somewhat different, winging its way over the sea towards Belfast. To my surprise and delight, however, the stranger made a sudden turn, and alighted on the beach at a short

* Ornithologie Européenne.

distance, which was scarcely done when it became my victim. Immediately on lifting the bird, though I had never seen one before, I knew it to be the spotted redshank, from recollection of Bewick's beautiful figure of that species. It was admirably killed for being stuffed, not a speck of blood being on any part of its plumage, or a wound anywhere visible. To prevent the possibility of its plumage being even ruffled from contact with my pocket, the bird was carried in my hand, and when I reached home was most carefully (as I believed) laid aside, preparatory to my absence for a few hours. Alas! however, on my return the beauteous prize was missing, but was eventually discovered—served up at the dinner table in company with a curlew and other vulgar denizens of the shore. My boyish mortification may easily be imagined, as my good fortune in having obtained so fine a specimen of a bird never known to visit the Irish coast, had been the all-engrossing thought of the day."

Closely resembling the next species in its winter plumage, it may have occurred upon our shores unnoticed. More commonly observed in France, we are informed by Degland of its habit of standing in water reaching to its abdomen, and pecking at water insects as they rise to the surface.*

Habitat—Southern Europe.

Species 145.—The Redshank.

Totanus calidris. Bechs.
Chevalier gambette. Temm.

Pool Snipe. Redlegged Snipe.

This species, the most common of the Irish Totani, is found during all seasons around the coast. Although never occurring in the immense flocks we see the true Tringidæ collect in, we sometimes observe the redshank in rather considerable numbers, and, like the godwit, giving the preference to oozy situations, where the mud is soft and easily probed or penetrated.

In such places the habits of the redshank are not unworthy of our notice, and when engaged searching for food a flock impart something of animation to the shore; boring and feeding in the sand, they are never stationary for an instant, for when we might suppose one resting for a moment, the body is invariably shaken with a vibrating and tremulous motion. The most favourite of all situations with the redshank is the

* Ornithologie Européenne.

deposit of alluvial matter carried down to the sea by rivers, and about which we constantly see troops of the restless and active redshank. Attractive from the bright red colour of the legs, from which it derives its name, it is easily distinguished on the shore or in flight.

During summer it is of more rarity, only a few isolated individuals out of the large flocks observed on the shore in winter, remaining to breed. In the vicinity of the Dublin coast two instances of its nidification have occurred to us, one on the sandbanks near Rush, and the other on the Wicklow coast near Greystones. In one nest three eggs were obtained, and the other was tenanted by the same number of young; of which the male, in the beautiful spotted breeding plumage, was unfortunately shot.

On the small islands situated before Skerries we have observed flocks of the redshank crowding every little projecting rock, patiently awaiting the falling tide to leave the main-shore line exposed. Vigilant and suspicious when feeding, the least alarm is sufficient to cause the entire flock to take wing, each bird uttering at the same time its loud and piercing alarm-cry.

Habitat—Europe.

Species 146.—The Greenshank.

Totanus glottis. Jard.
Chevalier aboyeur. Temm.

Greenlegged Horseman.

Not occurring in any proportion like the redshank, we might characterize the greenshank as a species occasionally obtained upon our eastern coast. Although one of those birds not remarkable for bright or showy plumage, yet we can never fail admiring the chaste and beautiful harmony of its subdued colour. Thus it has appeared to us as one of our most elegant shore-birds from the unsullied and spotless white of the under parts, contrasting so elegantly with the dark and delicately marked plumage of the back.

Frequenting similar situations with the redshank, it is only remarked during winter and autumn in pairs, or occasionally in small flocks, averaging from five to ten individuals.

Of great wariness, we have observed individuals feeding on the Clontarf strand taking flight and screaming vociferously their alarm-cry at the sound of a horn or the whistle of a railway train, a sound to which the knots, dunlins, and redshanks, feeding in the vicinity, never paid at any time the

least attention. Although less remarkable than the redshank, we observe the same quivering of the body that so much distinguishes that bird. At times it wades out so far after the tide that the water often covers the knee-joint, and, when alarmed in such places, the legs are dangled more than usually behind, similar to a habit of the common bunting and heron.

Habitat—Southern Europe.

Species 147.—The Green Sandpiper.

Totanus ochropus. Linn.
Chevalier cul blanc. Temm.

The rarest in occurrence of the more common Totani, the green sandpiper is seldom met with in our island, and is principally observed during winter in the markets of the city, there attracting the attention of our hawkers of wild fowl, possessed of a certain amount of discrimination to enable them to fix upon an absurd price for a species they believe so very rare, from its seldom coming under their observation.

Frequenting inland localities, three specimens in our collection, obtained from dealers, were forwarded from inland situations.

Possessing more distinctly marked plumage than the greenshank, we see the same spotless white of the under parts of this bird, whilst the upper plumage is dotted with whitish spots upon the rich and deeply bronzed feathers of the back. Of great rarity in its occurrence during summer, two specimens obtained in that season came under our own observation, both of which were shot in the county of Kildare, each habited in the full adult breeding plumage. Another specimen was obtained on the Merrion strand, associating with the dunlins and knots, a locality for which they affect bu little partiality.

Habitat—Southern Europe.

Species 148.—The Common Sandpiper.

Totanus hypoleucus. Linn.
Chevalier guignette. Temm.
Sand-lark.

This beautiful little species is one of our most interesting birds, and appears of more rarity than it really is, on account of the unfrequented localities it selects. Its delicate form and elegant proportions seem to render it unable to bear the rigour of our winters, so that, like the majority of our migra-

tory visitors, it arrives with us in the beginning of May, and takes its departure in September.

On the arrival of this elegant visitant, it immediately betakes itself to the neighbourhood of small rivers, mountain streams, and the sandy margins of lakes. In our own vicinity we find them distributed sparingly along the Dodder, becoming more frequent as we approach its source, and dispersed in a similar manner along the retired rivulets of the Dublin and Wicklow mountains.

In such localities it continues in safety; its haunts rarely intruded on except by the occasional footsteps of the angler, or the shrill halloo of some rustic goatherd. To both its presence is at once pleasing and amusing; indeed so much so that we have at times surprised the mountaineer, heedless of any charge, reclining on the sunny turf, his eyes radiant with pleasure, and his feet beating in unison with the changing attitudes of the sandpiper. So harmless are its habits, that all who have the pleasure of its acquaintance regard it as an agreeable favourite. Few anglers who, in pursuit of their favourite pastime, ascend towards the source of our picturesque trout streams, do not recognise their cheerful companion with the same pleasurable sensations with which we regard the return of the cuckoo and the swallow.

Its food consists of small insects, animalculæ, and molluscæ, abundance of which is furnished in such localities. When in pursuit of its prey it displays an endless and elegant variety of attitudes, enlivened with its peculiar piping whistle—

> "Along the river's rocky marge
> The sand-lark sings a joyous song."

Unlike the sea-larks of the coast, which are generally congregated in large flocks, this species only occurs in pairs. Even on their arrival we have never observed more than six together. The observation of the habits of the sandpiper has always afforded us pleasure. At times seated by the river's margin in some retired glen, quiet and secluded, where—

> "The only visitant's a straggling sheep,
> The stonechat or the glancing sandpiper"

break in upon the solitude, a pair shoot rapidly past us, alighting on the river's edge; stiffening their wings above the back, they run with astonishing celerity along the gravel, and, flitting to some exposed stone in the river, they utter their prolonged amatory note. Now startling the water-ousels from

their station, they imitate the dipper by the peculiar ducking of the body; when a gaudy dragon-fly displays its wings it is at once pursued and captured by the untiring sandpipers. The nest is soon formed, and is generally a hollow in the sand, or placed in some bank at a distance from the water. The eggs are usually four, enormously disproportionate in size to the bird, cream-coloured, blotched and spotted with brown and purple. After the cares of the breeding season, we see the parents and their young collected in a small flock, moving down the river to the sea, there to await a favourable wind for their return to a more favoured clime.

An allied species, the wood sandpiper (*Totanus glareola*) is believed to have been observed in Ireland, on the authority of Dr. Robert Ball, who remarks having observed a species of Totanus during several years frequenting a stream in the neighbourhood of Youghal and Cork during the month of June.*

Habitat—Southern Europe.

Genus LXXVI.—Tringa (Sandpiper).

Species 149.—The Purre or Dunlin.

Tringa variabilis. Linn.
Bécasseau brunette ou variable. Temm.

Sea-snipe. Sea-lark. Stint.

The preceding species we have observed occasionally forming in flocks; we now arrive at the true sandpipers. Always occurring in immense flocks, but differing from them, we see an approximation to the godwits in the seasonal change of the plumage from gray to red or brown.

Of these birds the dunlin occurs in the greatest abundance on our coast; and, large as are the flocks of curlew, their number is small in comparison with those of this species. Found along every variety of shore, they appear indifferently upon the mud and ooze, or on the hard and sandy level in both situations, finding an equal abundance of food in probing the mud or following the receding tide upon the otherwise destitute strand. The dunlin is exceedingly interesting in its habits, and its observation presents at all times an attraction to the ornithologist, and an amusing incident to the casual observer.

Crowded together, they occupy some sandbank, rock, or

* Thompson.

any embankment in the neighbourhood of the shore, where the entire flock remain with the utmost resignation and patience, their numbers considerably increased by other "tide waiters," in the shape of ring dotterels and knots; all motionless, the great majority stand upon one leg, with the other drawn up and hidden in the plumage, and although apparently inattentive, all are watchful when the least portion of the strand is uncovered. That being observed, instantly the entire flock rise with a single motion, and sweep rapidly over to the exposed sand; rising in the air for a few feet before alighting, the flock drop like a single bird upon the strand, each, expressing satisfaction by piping its melodious note, sets at once actively to work; and, running after the retiring waves with the greatest eagerness, at one moment springing up to avoid the splash, and the next running along the strand with their wings extended to their utmost, as if to dry the spray which had fallen on them. Sometimes an intruder of larger size may alight beside them, but it is not regarded; at times even a heron may flap its starved bulk along and pitch down into the centre of the flock, but even its dignity is not consulted, and they continue to make the very shingle melodious with their shrill and pleasing call-notes.

The most perfect in their evolutions of all our Irish birds, we are often astonished at the surprising and beautiful appearance which is presented by a flock when on the wing. Flying off when alarmed, they proceed some few hundred yards, when instantly the entire flock, with the most instant effect, turn on the wing, and, where scarcely observed previously, the air seems suddenly bright with the flash of perhaps two thousand snowy underwings. So perfect is the motion performed by each bird, that we might suppose it were some aerial piece of mechanism that had produced it; or, as we once heard it illustrated by an old sailor who was observing them, that, "sorra one bit of use in drilling, for they are the best soldiers on the strand."

On the approach of spring they betake themselves, in flocks of some thousands, to their northern breeding haunts very few remaining on our coast to breed.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Species 150.—The Pigmy Curlew.

Tringa subarquata. Linn.
Bécasseau corcoli. Temm.

Curlew Sandpiper.

This species, closely resembling the preceding in size and general appearance, may at once be distinguished by its more graceful and elegant form, and during all seasons by its white upper tail coverts.

Very rarely occurring upon our eastern coasts, it is, perhaps, found in the greatest proportion upon the northern and north-eastern portion of the island; and although it has never come under our own observation along the Dublin, Louth, or Wicklow shores, it has occurred in five or six instances, two of which were obtained for our collection. In the great majority of instances the pigmy curlew has been procured during autumn. None were ever observed on the coast after that season.

One of the most beautiful of the smaller shore-birds, the pigmy curlew is admirably worthy of its name, as it is a complete miniature of its larger namesake, and from standing higher on the tarsi than the dunlin when intermixed with flocks of the latter, it might seem to look down upon the pretensions of that melodious little sandpiper.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Species 151.—The Broad-billed Sandpiper.

Tringa platyrhyncha. Selby.
Bécasseau platyrhynque. Temm.

As noticed by Mr. Thompson in the Annals of Natural History, this rare species has only been obtained in two instances in Great Britain, one of which was shot on a muddy ooze, in the vicinity of Belfast, together with eleven golden plover and eight dunlins, all of which were obtained by the one discharge of a swivel gun.

Of exceeding interest, we have taken the following excellent remarks on the species from Mr. Thompson's Irish Fauna:—

"This is a very interesting species to the ornithologist, from the circumstance of its presenting the characters of several genera. Its general aspect, body, plumage, delicate tarsi and feet, is that of a Tringa; but in the form of the head, breadth between the eyes, and broad base of bill, we

are reminded of the genus Scolopax, or true snipe, as we likewise are in the brown and white banding of the head; in which latter respect it likewise resembles the whimprel (*Numenius phæopus*); except in the head and bill, the whole bird is in form and plumage an ordinary-looking Tringa."

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Species 152.—The Buff-breasted Sandpiper.

Tringa rufescens. Viellot.
Bécasseau rousset. Temm.

This species, only obtained in a single instance, was shot by Mr. John Hill upon the "slob," in the vicinity of the Pigeon House Wall, Dublin. Having been preserved, it was presented by that gentleman to the Dublin Natural History Society's Museum, in which collection it is now preserved. It is an immature bird in the plumage of the first year.

This very rare North American sandpiper has been noticed as having occurred in eight instances in England, which is somewhat curious, as we should expect the proportion to have been procured in our island from its vicinity to the American coast.

Habitat—North America.

Species 153.—Schintz's Sandpiper.

Tringa Schintzii. Bonaparte.
Bécasseau de Schintz. Temm.

Equally interesting as are the others from their rarity, we have another North American species, supposed to have occurred upon the Irish coast, respecting which we transcribe the following notice of its occurrence from Mr. Thompson's work:—

"There is a specimen of *Tringa Schintzii* in the Belfast Museum, respecting which positive information cannot now be obtained, but it is supposed to have been shot in the Bay here, in consequence of having been preserved in a manner peculiar to a taxidermist who set up a fresh 'sandpiper' (as it is called in his book) for the collection on the 15th of April, 1836. All circumstances considered, that sandpiper is believed to have been the one in question. No Tringa was 'mounted' by the same preserver from dried skins. I have compared the specimen with the American one described by Mr. Yarrell, and found identity in the species."

This sandpiper, common along the coasts of North Ame-

rica, only claims admission to the European Fauna from the occurrence of a single specimen obtained in the south of England.

Habitat—North America.

Species 154.—The Little Stint.

Tringa minuta. Leisl.
Bécasseau echasses. Temm.

Least Sandpiper.

This interesting little species occupies the same place amongst the Waders the goldcrest holds with the Perchers, and the storm petrel amongst the natatorial birds, being the most minute in size of the entire order to which it belongs.

Very unusual in its distribution, it occurs in a similar proportion to the pigmy curlew, and like that species is found along the north-eastern portion of the coast in greater numbers than in any other locality.

In Dublin Bay the stint has come under our own observation on two occasions,—once in 1850, when three were observed along with an equal number of the handsomely marked ring dotterel, searching for food upon some refuse mud recently dredged from the river, all appearing to be feeding upon insects generated by the heat of a strong September sun. On another occasion two were observed at Rob's Wall, near Malahide, both of which appeared even more diminutive from the vicinity of a lordly black-backed gull, which, with head imbedded in its shoulders, stood majestically in repose, its dignity not unbending to admit even a look at those little elf-like birds running around apparently in pursuit of sand-flies. Described as being watchful and wary in its habits, a male specimen in our collection was killed by a boatman striking it with a stone, at the small island near the Drogheda Railway, at Clontarf station. Another specimen, obtained as early as the 10th of August, has not the slightest appearance of the reddish brown distinguishing the breeding season, but is in the light-gray plumage characteristic of winter.

On the sea-shore at Newhaven, on the south-eastern extremity of England, we had the pleasure of observing a small flock consisting of six birds, all feeding along the shingle, and when disturbed uttering their peculiar call-notes.

The name of the present species appears one familiarly known to the old annalists, but from the great abundance of the dunlin and the rarity of the stint, the former is doubtless

meant. We even find them served up in company with the more gigantic crane, at Archbishop Neville's feast. And, subsequently, in the Household Book of the Duke of Northumberland, "styntes" are remarked as worthy to be admitted to his Lordship's own "mees," and are charged at the rate of six pence a dozen. From the accompanying description they must have occupied the place held by the ortolan at the present time:—

> "The puet, godwit, stynt, the pallat that allure
> The miser, and doe make a fearful epicure."

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Species 155.—Temminck's Stint.

Tringa Temminckii. Leisler.
Bécasseau Temmia. Temm.

This rare species, named in honour of that great *savant* to whom natural history is so much indebted for his profound and unremitting research, has, like many other species in the genus, only occurred in a single instance, which came under the observation of Richard Chute, Esq., of Blennerville, and to whose discernment we are indebted for adding it to our Fauna. Obtained at the end of January, 1848, it was killed at a freshwater pool in the vicinity of the town of Tralee, during the continuance of a severe frost.

Habitat—Southern Europe.

Species 156. The Purple Sandpiper.

Tringa maritima. Brunn.
Bécasseau violet. Temm.

Rock Sandpiper.

The Purple Sandpiper is a species so very local in its distribution that it is seldom observed or obtained.

Almost unknown upon our eastern shores, it has only been procured in some four or five instances, one of which occurred in Dublin Bay. More common around the precipices of the west, Mr. Glennon remarked, whilst remaining in Achill, the existence of several flocks frequenting the Sound and rocky shores of the mainland.

Differing from all the sandpipers in the shortness of the tarsi and heavy appearance of the body, this species is easily recognised by the purple gloss which is so conspicuous as to obtain for it its most common name. Curious in its habits,

we see the purple sandpiper affecting none of the localities where the majority of its family are to be found, but leaving the sandy shore, the marsh, and the river side, it frequents alone the vicinity of maritime precipices, or any broken range of rocks along the shore line. Occurring also in small communities, it offers a wide difference to the countless flocks in which the smaller species are sometimes observed.

When disturbed, the flock sweeps in a circling flight over the sea, and seldom changes into any of the beautiful appearances so admired in the common dunlin, but returns at once to the vicinity of the rocks from whence it had been disturbed.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Species 157.—The Knot.

Tringa Canutus. Linn.
Bécasseau Canet. Temm.

Ash-coloured Sandpiper. Sea-snipe. Red Sandpiper.

The Knot, with the exception of the dunlin, is the most common of all the sea-larks, and, like that species, appears to be almost as widely distributed along the coast. Preferring more the true feeding grounds of the Tringæ and Totanidæ, we may at all times see the knot in those situations where there is an abundance of soft muddy ooze, but seldom, like the dunlin and ring dotterel, in the vicinity of hard, dry, sandy reaches. Very similar in its habits to the dunlin, we see it in large flocks, the evolutions upon the wing are equally as remarkable for their beauty.

Of exceeding rarity upon our coast during summer, it is only in September that the great flocks that have finished their breeding cares in the remote latitudes of the north arrive upon our coast, the diminished numbers of the preceding season augmented and recruited by their young; all of which we again observe formed into flocks at the end of February to return to their endless migration.

The name of this species, apparently possessed of so little meaning, is, according to the old annalists, owing to their having been selected as a favourite dish for King Canute, and for which cause they obtained the name, which became in time corrupted into "knute," and at last to "knot."

> "The knotte that called was Canute's bird of old,—
> Of that great King of Danes, his name that still doth hold;
> His appetite to please, that farre and neere was sought
> For him, as some have said, from Denmark hither brought."

During winter we occasionally see the knot exposed in the markets of the city, where it is dignified with the name of sea-snipe.

In the summer plumage, so rarely observed in Ireland, it is one of our most beautiful plumaged birds. A specimen in our collection, obtained in Clare by Edward Burton, Esq., of Clifden, exhibits the same rich reddish colour of the breast which had obtained for it the well-known name of red sand-piper, and caused older naturalists at one time to raise it to the dignity of a new species.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Genus LXXVII.—Himantopus (Stiltshank).

Species 158.—The Black-winged Stilt.

Himantopus melanopterus. Selby.
Echasse à manteau noir. Temm.

Long-legged Plover.

This extraordinary-looking species, so remarkable for the immense development of the tarsi, is of the greatest rarity, two or three specimens being the utmost we can reckon of its occurrence in our Fauna.

Remarkably slender in its form, with a distinguishing plumage of black and white, the legs are so immensely elongated, as to have suggested the idea of a bird progressing upon stilts. From the notice of a specimen obtained in Norfolk by the Rev. R. Lubbock, the following curious particulars are remarked:—"When shot it was standing in a shallow pool of water, mid-leg deep, apparently snapping at insects in the air as they buzzed about it."* The stilt has also been obtained in several other instances in England and Scotland. What taste the flesh has we are unable to determine, but Belon informs us they were served at the table of "Monseigneur le Cardinal de Tournon en la duché d'Urbri," and were found excellent. Well known to the elder Pliny, it still preserves the name (*Himantopus*) which he had given it.

Habitat—Northern Africa.

* Jardine.

Genus LXXVIII.—Recurvirostra (Curved-bill).

Species 159.—The Avosett.

Recurvirostra avosetta. Selby.
Avocette à nuque noir. Temm.

Scooper. Cobbler's Awl.

This species, equally remarkable in its form as the preceding, resembles it in being another of our rarest African visitants, having only been obtained in a few instances in our island.

Interesting as is the stiltshank to the ornithologist, from the elongation of the tarsi, this species is not less so from the curious shape of the bill, turned up in a contrary way from the generality of the species, and for which peculiarity it has obtained its appellation of avosett or scooper.

In Rutty's History of the County Dublin the occurrence of one of these birds is noted:—"A. D. 1767, in winter, was shot in the Lotts, near the North Wall, by Robert Bevin, sexton of Christ Church, a bird very rarely found here, being properly an Italian bird, called 'avosetta and beccostorto,' from its bill generally three and a half inches long, and often turned up for half its length."

Since that time the avocett has been obtained in eight or nine instances along the southern and western portions of the island.

In this genus we observe the toes differing from all the other species in the family, being connected with webs, suggesting the idea of the bird being able to support itself easily on the soft slimy marshes where it obtains its food, a peculiarity which, according to Degland, enables it to swim with the greatest agility.*

Habitat—Northern Africa.

Genus LXXIX.—Strepsilas (Turnstone).

Species 160.—The Turnstone.

Strepsilas interpres. Leach.
Tourne pierre à collier. Temm.

Sea-lark.

The Turnstone, a bird of considerable interest in its habits, is only a winter visitant to our shores, and although not found

* Ornithologie Européenne.

in the same numbers with the knot, it is yet common in its occurrence along the shore.

Separated from the true Tringæ into a distinct genus, from the peculiarity of its habits, it is remarkable on the coast for turning over the shingle and pebbles in search of whatever mollusca or crustacea may have been left in their vicinity by the receding tide.

At times we meet with the turnstone examining the heaps of dried sea-weed and fuci left beyond high watermark, and, when so engaged, it admits of a very near approach, and when disturbed or alarmed we can at all times distinguish it from the knot by the snowy whiteness of the under-wings and body, and by the loud mellow whistle uttered whilst flying off.

Occasionally we may also see the turnstone, in company with the redshank, frequenting rocky islets, and flying backwards and forwards between them and the mainland.

A specimen which once fell to our gun had only the rudiment of the leg remaining, the foot in all probability had been shot off by some previous discharge; the stump of the leg had healed, however, and, although worn by the attrition of the shore, still performed all the offices of the wanting member.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Genus LXXX.—Ostralegus (Oyster Plover).

Species 161.—The Oyster Plover.

Ostralegus hæmatopus. Macgillivray.
Huiterier pie. Temm.

Sea Pie. Oyster Catcher.

This is a bird obtained at all seasons in suitable localities around our coasts. Seldom found in the neighbourhood of precipitous cliffs, it gives the preference to low-lying, flat, sandy beaches, which have inequalities in their surface, or are interspersed with oyster or muscle beds.

Although not possessing the graceful proportions of many of our shore-birds, the oyster plover is, when occuring in large flocks, an ornament to many of our wild bleak tracts of sandy shore. The rich orange-colour of the bill, and chastely disposed plumage of black and white, which has obtained it the appellation of "Sea Pie," compensate for any supposed defect of form. It is a shy and watchful bird, and is very difficult to approach within shot without alarming the entire flock. If disturbed when feeding, they run along the strand or shingle

with great swiftness, take flight, and utter the loud shrill whistle peculiar to them under such circumstances. The oyster plover is gregarious, and generally occurs in small flocks, which break up and separate on the approach of the breeding season.

Generally frequenting the sea-shore, at times they occur in considerable numbers inland, frequenting fallow and ploughed lands in company with the blackheaded and common gulls, and sometimes in such large numbers, that, on one occasion, we had the satisfaction of observing a ploughed field, on the lands of Mellifont Abbey, in Louth, occupied by some eighty or a hundred birds, and interspersed with lapwings and the black-headed gull, they really presented a beautiful appearance, their unsullied under-plumage appearing to the greatest advantage when taking flight.

Their food consists of the various marine animals left on the shore by the receding tide, amongst which we may enumerate small crabs, muscles, and shell-fish, in search of which they frequently wade in the water.

The place for incubation is usually chosen on the ground; and the eggs, generally four in number, are deposited in any natural hollow or slight depression in the sand or shingle. The eggs are long and are light yellow in colour, spotted and blotched with blackish brown. When the parent birds have young they manifest the greatest anxiety on the approach of a dog or stranger, and wheel about, loudly vociferating their shrill alarm; and even, like the lapwing or green plover, feign lameness, in hopes of decoying the inquisitive stranger.

Indigenous.

Genus LXXXI.—Phalaropus (Phalarope).

Species 162.—The Gray Phalarope.

Phalaropus lobatus. Lath.
Phalarope platyrhinque. Temm.

This handsome species can be only set down as a rare and uncertain straggler on our coasts, and is obtained only during autumn, or the commencement of winter. In the beautiful plumage of the summer the phalarope is of extreme rarity on our shores.

This interesting bird is remarkable for the curious development of a thin membrane fringing the toes, which, at one period among the earlier naturalists, obtained for it the appropriate name of the "Cootfooted sandpiper;" and which

at once serves to distinguish it from the great number of the smaller sandpipers—a distinction indicating an analogy to the grebes amongst the Water-birds, and the coot and water-hen amongst the Waders; thus forming a connecting link between those two families, as the butcher birds between the Raptores and the Perchers.

The food of the phalarope consists of insects, molluscæ, worms, and small testaceous animals; for which, with the sandpipers, it probes the mud and ooze.

On account of the rarity of this handsome species, naturalists have had but limited opportunities for observing its habits; for which reason we must travel in fancy to the far west, where the celebrated ornithologist of America, Audobon, observes in his Ornithological Notes, that the phalarope is gregarious, forming in large flocks on the approach of winter, and frequenting the neighbourhood of the Ohio and Arkansas rivers, where he saw them swimming along the margin, and picking up the seeds of grasses; also it has been observed far out at sea, at a considerable distance from any land, assembling in hundreds on the banks of sea-weed.

Yet, even where they abound in such numbers, the phalarope is difficult to be obtained, as it swims with great speed, runs along the sand or shingle with ease and rapidity, and flies with considerable swiftness. The flesh of the phalarope, according to the same authority, is excellent.

A closely allied species, the red phalarope (*Phalaropus hyperboreus*), has not as yet been obtained on our coasts, although described by Bullock as breeding on the Orkney Islands, where they displayed the greatest tameness, appearing like a duck in miniature from their ease in swimming.

The phalarope in spring retires to the Arctic regions of both continents to breed. Like the godwits, and other birds of the Scolopacidæ, the phalarope assumes during summer the peculiar rich livery of the breeding season; and in that plumage is of excessive rarity in its occurrence. One specimen, of six obtained on the eastern coasts of Ireland, in our own collection, was shot on the 20th of June, 1849, and very strangely exhibits the same gray stage of plumage as the others, obtained in the autumn and winter of different years.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Genus LXXXII.—Arenaria (Sanderling).

Species 163.—The Sanderling.

Arenaria calidris. Selby.
Sanderling variable. Temm.

Sea-lark.

This plainly attired little sea-lark has caused considerable confusion to ornithologists, by their placing it in differently allied genera, and as hastily removing it, until allowed the specific honour of a genus to itself.

Restricted to a single species, the sanderling is found in Europe, Africa, and America, and in our own island. Its occurrence, although not actually rare, is yet in such paucity of numbers as compared with the common sea-larks (as all the different species comprising dunlins, knots, and redshanks, are best known by the frequenters of the sea-shore), that it might be classed as an unusual visitant.

Frequenting, as the name indicates, the immediate vicinity of the sand, they are seldom observed, like the other birds, in the neighbourhood of the ooze and muddy banks which many of these species delight to frequent.

The peculiar pale gray colour which distinguishes the species in the usual plumage obtained upon our coasts might induce the young ornithologist, meeting it for the first time, to believe it was the nearly similarly attired phalarope which greeted his view.

Pleasing in its habits, the observance of a flock has been a sight which at all times gratified us, and never more than in the autumn of 1852, when the sandy reach between Malahide and Baldoyle was covered with several unusually large flocks, dispersed over the surface in scattered pairs: each bird, after standing for a time motionless, would then run some ten or twelve yards and stop with the same instant movement, and again proceed with a certain curious mechanical motion, as if automaton birds, pushed forward by the aid of some hidden machinery. At times some occasional lagger would take wing, and, alighting in the midst of a small community, run with extraordinary rapidity, the wings extended to the utmost over its back. All those beautiful movements are performed with the greatest silence, no cry or call-note ever disturbing the dignity of the proceeding.

Like the knot and turnstone, the sanderling is of excessive rarity in its occurrence during summer; although specimens obtained on the Dublin and Wexford coasts have come under our notice.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

FAMILY XXXI.—CHARADRIADÆ (PLOVERS).

Genus LXXXIII.—Œdicnemus (Thicknee).

Species 164.—The Great Plover.

Œdicnemus crepitans. Linn.
Œdicnéme criard. Temm.

Thickneed Bustard. Norfolk Plover. Stone Curlew.

The Thicknee, or Great Plover, is a species of great rarity, and four or five specimens obtained are all we can reckon of its occurrence in Ireland. Of these, one was procured at Clontarf, in the winter of 1829, and recorded by Dr. J. D. Marshall, of Belfast; and two others, observed by Richard D. Parker, Esq., of Cork, on the mountains of Iveragh, during the month of August, 1842.* They appeared so tame as to allow an approach within some ten or twelve yards before taking flight, and, when rising, both uttered their shrill, loud whistle.

A thicknee in our collection was shot in the county of Clare, in the autumn of 1844; and, like the last-mentioned, was remarked at the time for its tameness and fearlessness of danger.

Attractive from its large size and appearance, the thicknee is a fine-looking species; and connecting, as it does, the bustard with the plover, it is one of much interest to the ornithologist. With it we also observe another change in the character of the localities frequented by it, which are large, sandy, open tracts, often with an entire absence of water in their vicinity. In such places, when pursued, the thicknee prefers running along the ground rather than trust to its powers of flight to escape from danger.

In the great majority of the species already described, we have found a large proportion to be winter visitants to our island. This species, on the contrary, we find to occur during summer in Great Britain.

Habitat—Southern Europe.

* Thompson.

Genus LXXXIV.—Squatarola (Plover).

Species 165.—The Gray Plover.

Squatarola cinerea. Selby.
Pluvier cinerè. Temm.

Sea Plover.

The Sea Plover, the name by which this species is most commonly known upon the coasts of the eastern portion of the island, occurs only in very limited numbers around our shores, and, from its habit of never passing inland, may appear of more rarity than it really is.

Only observed during winter in any numbers upon the coast, it is a species of the greatest rarity in the rich and beautiful plumage which so much distinguishes the nuptial dress of the plovers in the season of incubation; in that state of plumage but three specimens have been obtained in Ireland, one of which, shot in July, 1849, at Clontarf, on the borders of the Bay of Dublin, is in the author's collection.

Of great wariness in admitting approach, the gray plover is one of the most watchful of our shore-birds; and, like the curlew, takes wing upon the slightest alarm, startling every bird within hearing with its loud shrill whistle.

On rare occasions we may observe the gray plover in the markets of the city, and generally disposed of at a price that argues its inferiority with the golden plover as regards its flesh.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Species 166.—The Golden Plover.

Squatarola pluvialis. Selby.
Pluvier dorè. Temm.

Yellow Plover. Green Plover. Black-breasted Plover.

This beautifully plumaged species, either in the rich brilliancy of the summer, or the more subdued tints of winter plumage, is, with the exception of the lapwing, the most common and widely distributed of all our grallatorial species. Found in winter upon the sea-shore in flocks of considerable magnitude, they form at all times a conspicuous contrast with the immense flocks of curlews, dunlins, and knots, which occur so abundantly upon the sea-coast at that season.

On the approach of spring the birds begin to attain the beautiful glossy-black breast so remarkable in this and the preceding species. The sea-shore is then deserted;

the flock break up and separate into pairs to perform the duties of incubation. The haunts usually selected for this purpose are the summits of elevated mountain ranges and heath-clad hills. On the Wicklow mountains we have observed this plover on the heath, and had much pleasure in observing its habits. Standing on some mossy knoll or rock, it admits of a close approach, uttering repeatedly its protracted wailing and melancholy whistle. We can observe it at a short distance attentively regarding us, the large, prominent, black eye, so replete with the mildness that characterizes the bird, indicating its fear at our intrusion upon its mountain solitude. Disturb it, and, flying to the nearest projecting rock, it recommences the same long wail of sorrow. When startled from the nest, the female rises stealthily, and runs a considerable distance along the heath, and then flies to the nearest rising ground, emulating the male with her peculiar mourning cry. Occasionally, when the young are not strong enough to take care of themselves, the golden plover adopts means similar to the lapwing to lead us from the vicinity of the nest; flying with a wavering flight, as if the wing had received some injury, and feigning lameness in her attempts to decoy.

The flesh of this plover is extremely delicate, and is one of the most frequent of the family seen exposed in the markets of the city. Valued equally high at a distant period, 500 appeared at the feast of Neville, Archbishop of York; and again, at a dinner in Henry the Eighth's time, we find the following item:—Plovers, eight of a dish, three dozen at five shillings.

Indigenous.

Genus LXXXV.—Vanellus (Lapwing).

Species 167.—The Lapwing.

Vanellus cristatus. Jardine.
Vanneau huppè. Temm.

Phillipene. Green Plover.

As an example of beauty of form harmonizing with brilliancy of plumage, the lapwing is the most beautiful of the extensive family to which it belongs.

A resident during all seasons, in summer it frequents large tracts of pasture and moorlands, which, on the approach of winter, are deserted for the sea-shore, where they appear in large flocks.

Widely distributed over our island, they exceed in numbers any of our other native grallatorial tribes. Indeed, so abundant is the species, that it may be observed during all seasons within a few miles of Dublin, and is the first wading-bird that approaches the metropolis for the purposes of nidification. Although occasionally the snipe and land-rail may breed in a favourite locality, in the vicinity of any large town, yet the breeding haunts of the lapwing are generally to be met with in any place affording them the slightest security and cover.

This species occurs in greater numbers in Ireland than in either of the sister countries. The humid character of the island and the prevalence of large tracts of unreclaimed and marshy moorlands are admirably adapted to its habits. Of late years it has somewhat diminished in numbers, in consequence of the great advance of drainage and reclaiming of waste lands in Ireland. The food of the lapwing consists of worms and insects, and occasionally berries may be detected in the stomach.

We have seldom derived more pleasure in observing the habits of any of the native species than those of the lapwing. Perhaps the picturesque scenery with which it is associated is in its favour. However that may be, its habits attract attention even from the most unobservant. Its curious clamorous cries, from which it has derived so many names, together with its strange hovering flight and anxiety when the neighbourhood of the nest is approached, all render the lapwing familiar, as its history is interesting.

In each of the three kingdoms the lapwing is better known to the community by the local names it has received from its strange wailing cries. In England it is generally recognised as the "peewit," or "peewit plover;" in Scotland, as the "pease-weep," whilst in our own island its most common name is the "phillipene" or "phillapee." Each of the three several names resembles the cries uttered during the season of incubation.

During that season, the innate timidity so characteristic of all wading-birds is lost by the lapwing; it then assumes almost a semi-domesticated habit, flying within some dozen yards of any intruder upon its territory, vociferously screaming, and following him a considerable distance in the effort to save the nest and young from discovery. We might even picture Shakspere himself rambling about the fields of Stratford, observing their habits, when he alludes to it so truthfully—

"Far from her haunts, the lapwing screams away!"

So persecuted is the lapwing, that were it not for large accessions to their numbers every winter, from other latitudes, it would be totally extirpated within a few years. The peculiar delicacy of the flesh gains it high repute in the markets, where, although large numbers are exposed for sale, a considerable proportion is forwarded to the Liverpool and other English markets. Prized equally some centuries ago, the lapwing was in the same manner esteemed, being valued at one penny each; and, in the "Northumberland Household Book," we find "wypes" admitted to his Lordship's own "mees." Unfortunately for the species, the delicacy of the flesh is also transmitted to the eggs, thousands of which appear in all our markets during spring.

Expensive as a luxury, we have frequently seen the price of the egg exceeding that of the bird when in season. At times, mixed up in the parcels of moss-enveloped eggs forwarded from coast-breeding stations, we have observed those of the kittiwake and black-headed gulls answer the purpose equally as well.

In England dogs are trained for the purpose of finding the eggs, which hunt by scent, and point as if at game, until the egg-man comes up.

So continued is the persecution of both egg and bird that we could almost imagine the unfortunate lapwing to be expiating some untold offence. Certain it is, according to the Koran, that Solomon, in a fit of ill humour at the non-appearance of his messenger, the lapwing, when sent to the Queen of Sheba, said, "What is the reason that I see not the lapwing? Is she absent? Verily I will chastise her with a severe punishment, or I will put her to death unless she bring me a just excuse."

However, as a requital for the implied punishment, the Persian Ferdusi has eulogised the lapwing in many glowing lines. And the Arabs of the present day have ascribed to it the power of finding water underground in the desert:

> "Fresh as the fountain underground,
> When first 'tis by the lapwing found."

Even over the pages of history the flight of the lapwing has passed: for we find in England the founder of an ancient family, who, having fallen wounded in a skirmish, would have perished but for the cries of these birds, which attracted the attention of his followers to the place. The knight, to evince his gratitude, emblazoned on his shield three lapwings, and this device is borne to the present day by his descendants.

Unfortunately, in Scotland the lapwing was unwittingly an injurer, and is sadly connected with many of the religious struggles which for a time devastated that country.

When the Covenanters had taken refuge among the heaths and moors of the Highlands to escape the persecutions imposed upon them, the troopers of Claverhouse and Dalzell were always sure to be directed to their retreat by the loud screams of the lapwing in their neighbourhood.

Thus, in a strange manner, were the congregations of many a hill-side sacrificed by the cries of the innocent offenders. In requital, a furious exterminating war was waged by the Covenanters on the lapwing, their descendants never discovering the nest without destroying the eggs or young. To which Leyden has alluded in the following lines:

> "And though the pitying sun withdraws his light,
> The lapwing's clamorous whoop attends their flight;
> Pursues their steps where'er the wanderers go,
> Till the shrill scream betray them to the foe.
> Poor bird, where'er the roaming swain intrudes
> On thy bleak heaths and desert solitudes,
> He curses still thy scream, and clamorous tongue,
> And crushes with his foot thy moulting young."

Indigenous.

Genus LXXXVI.—Charadrius (Sand Plover).

Species 168.—The Dotterel.

Charadrius morinellus. Linn.
Pluvier guignard. Temm.

The Dotterel is a species of rare occurrence in Ireland; and although in one instance twenty were observed in a flock,* and three of the birds were obtained, yet the occurrence of such a number was doubtless owing to the prevalence of contrary winds whilst the birds were migrating.

Breeding in haunts similar to the golden plover, the dotterel, on the approach of winter, collect into small flocks preparatory to their return to the shores from which they had migrated.

Connected with many fabulous stories, the dotterel has been represented as being so excessively stupid as to imitate every action of the fowler whilst approaching him. Thus, when the arm was held out, instantly a corresponding motion was made by the wing of the dotterel, and if a leg, that instant the

* Thompson.

dotterel drew up his. This story may, doubtless, have originated from its heedlessness of danger, and, when alarmed, its habit of extending the wings and running before the intruder.

Possessing the same gastronomic attractions for which the lapwing is so sought after, the flesh of this species is highly esteemed, and will bring from five to six shillings a couple in the London markets.

Habitat—Southern Europe.

Species 169.—The Ring Dotterel.

Charadrius hiaticula. Linn.
Grand Pluvier à collier. Temm.

Ring Plover. Bull's Eye. Sand-lark.

This beautiful little plover is well known upon the coast for its handsome plumage and shrill melodious whistle. Generally occurring in pairs, we may at all times discern them running upon the shingle of our own bay, with neck retracted, in search of food. Seldom occurring in flocks, the sociability of its habits induces it to join the company of the dunlins and knots, all three species being constantly observed together.

Towards spring they prepare to incubate, and for that purpose frequent sand-hills, or ranges of low beaches. In such a locality, in the vicinity of Rush, county of Dublin, we had the pleasure of discovering a nest containing young birds, in May, 1852, and at the same time an opportunity of observing its habit of decoying intruders from its nest. The female running along the strand first drew our attention by endeavouring to skulk away without attracting notice, but as our way was directed over the site of the nest, in a moment she was circling round us, and at the first sound of her plaintive whistle the male joined her, and both uttered their call-note in the most pitiable agony; when kneeling on the shingle to examine the young, either bird would perch at a distance and look in the direction of the nest, which they feared to lose, and again recur to their former cries and circling flight. However, with the exception of handling their young, they received no further molestation or annoyance.

On two occasions we have received the eggs from breeding stations on the Wicklow coast, where they occur in limited numbers along the sand-hills on the shore.

Indigenous.

Species 170.—The Kentish Dotterel.

Charadrius Cantianus. Latham.
Pluvier à collier interrompu. Temm.

This very rare species, exceeding the ring dotterel in the chaste and beautiful distribution of its colours, has only been obtained in very few instances along the sea-coasts of Ireland.

One of these specimens in our collection was obtained at Clontarf, in August, 1851, by an attendant at the railway station, who, observing the tameness of the bird in not being alarmed at the bustle of the passengers on the road, passing within some ten feet of where it was feeding, and its apparent unwillingness to take flight, killed it with a stone. The specimen was in beautiful adult plumage, and on dissection proved to be a male.

During the winter of 1852, several pairs came under the notice of J. H. Lamprey, Esq., on the small island situated opposite to Clontarf, some specimens of which were obtained and subsequently preserved.

Resembling the preceding in its habits, it has obtained the appellation of Kentish dotterel from having been first obtained and described from specimens shot at Sandwich, near Kent.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Genus LXXXVII.—Glareola (Pratincole).

Species 171.—The Collared Pratincole.

Glareola torquata. Selby.
Glareole à collier. Temm.

This curious form, which we have placed the last of our shore-birds, is of the greatest rarity, having only occurred in a single instance, at the seat of Lord Carbery, Castlefreke, in the county of Cork, where it was shot by the Rev. Joshua Stopford.

Interesting to us from the great development of the wings, we might appropriately name the pratincole as the shore swallow, as correctly as we do the tern the sea swallow, in both of which we see the elongated wing, forked tail, and sweeping flight, so much distinguishing our own land bird.

Little known in its habits, we are indebted to Degland for the following interesting notice:

"These pratincoles frequent the Black and Caspian Seas

in large numbers, where at all times they may be observed on the wing like the common swallow, describing figures in the air, and uttering their loud peculiar call-notes, very similar to those of the Sandwich tern (*Sterna cantiaca*). Resembling the plovers, they run with the greatest rapidity; and in the steepes and even the highways resemble the stonechats in the manner of shaking the tail, and not exhibiting the least fear of the passengers."

Habitat—Northern Africa.

FAMILY XXXII.—RALLIDÆ (RAILS).

Genus LXXXVIII.—Rallus (Rail).

Species 172.—The Water Rail.

Rallus aquaticus. Linn.
Rale d'eau vulgaire. Temm.

This species, the most beautiful in plumage of the Rallidæ, although not of actual rarity, is yet unusual in its occurrence. A resident during all seasons, it is principally observed in winter, when an occasional specimen is exposed for sale in the markets of the city. Living in the vicinity of sedges, reeds, and other aquatic plants, and possessed of shy, retired, and skulking habits, it generally escapes observation, as in most cases it prefers threading its way through the thickest of the herbage rather than trust to its powers of flight.

However, when unexpectedly surprised at a distance from herbage, it rises with a dangling motion of the legs peculiar to the birds of this family, but if pursued by a dog, it runs along the ground, with the body shaking from side to side, until it reaches the cover of impervious aquatic herbage by the river-side, where it is certain to baffle its pursuer.

A water rail at one time in our possession became remarkable for its familiarity and the pugnacity of its disposition, and, like a pet canary, would run over to the side of the long cage in which it was confined, fluttering with its wings and striking at the same time with its bill at whatever intruding finger disturbed it. A quail, equally remarkable for pugnacity, if standing in its way when running along the cage, was instantly pushed aside as if to afford an opportunity of evinc-

ing its further powers of pugnacity. Peace, was, however, enjoyed by the quail some short time afterwards by the untimely fate of the water rail: one morning it was found with its head protruding through the bars of its enclosure, and the neck dislocated in its attempts to obtain liberty.

Indigenous.

Genus LXXXIX.—Crex (Crake).

Species 173.—The Corn-Crake.

Crex pratensis. Bechstein.
Poule d' eau de genet. Temm.

Land Rail.

The Corn-Crake is the only species in the order which has had the attention of all classes directed to it, its attractive call sounding so joyful at all times. Arriving on our shores at the same time as the swallow and cuckoo,—those birds which add so many attractions to the summer,—their migrations have been well observed by the most heedless.

Similar in habits to the water rail, the localities frequented by it differ only in being situated in the vicinity of cultivation,—the meadow and the pasture field, where it is so unwilling to take flight, that it has been frequently captured by dogs, when attempting to escape by running. The corn-crake might have been classed with those birds limited in occurrence in our island, were it not for the loud and untiring repetition of its pleasing call-note.

Generally punctual in its arrival upon our shores, the corn-crake is seldom later in making its appearance than the first week in May, although we have heard isolated individuals calling as early as the 15th and 20th of April, yet these are only cited as being unusually early appearances of the species.

During summer few meadows or localities adapted to their habits are without them, and in such vicinity to the city, that we may hear their "call" in almost any of the suburbs.

Interesting as any of the harbingers of summer are, the appearance of the corn-crake is always looked forward to with pleasure in the country.

Appearing at a time when the earth would appear to have prepared its haunts for its reception, the corn-crake is, as we were told of it in the west of Ireland, "welcome as the flowers of May" to the localities which are enlivened by its call-note. This power, limited to the male, is uttered indifferently when running or remaining stationary in the field.

Possessing a variety of ventriloquism to the utmost extent, it appears at one instant to be in the immediate vicinity of the hearer, and the next moment at the farthest extremity of the field. Not unfrequently we may observe, during winter, an occasional corn-crake in the markets at the time its more fortunate migrators are craking under a more genial sky.

The flesh of the corn-crake is extremely delicate, for which we have Dryden's authority:—

"The rayle, which seldom comes but upon rich men's spits."

At many of the dinner courses, in the olden time "reys" held a conspicuous place,—being valued at twopence each, which must cause us considerable surprise when we recollect the mallard was similarly valued.

Habitat—Southern Europe.

Species 174.—The Spotted Crake.

Crex porzanna. Bechs.
Poule d'eau marouette. Temm.

Spotted Rail.

Of considerable rarity in Ireland, the spotted crake is a species but seldom coming under the notice of the ornithologist. Nearly a third less in size than the common species, it is similar in habits and migrations, but, not possessing any attractive call-note, its apparent rarity may be attributed to that cause.

Frequenting localities during the breeding season more aquatic in their character than the preceding, no occurrence of its nidification in Ireland has come under the notice of any of its describers. On the authority of H. Irwin, Esq., of Roscommon, we have been enabled to note it for the first time, from two instances of the nest and eggs having come under his observation, both of which were placed in sedgy bottoms, in a marshy situation in the vicinity of water. The number of eggs obtained in one instance was nine, a pair of which, presented by Mr. Irwin, are in our collection. In conversation with the same gentleman, he informed us that the occurrence of the spotted crake was nothing unusual, as it was a species which several times occurred to the snipe-shooters of the locality, by whom it was known as the little crake.

A specimen which came under the notice of a friend, Mr.

Hugh Doyle, was obtained by its unwillingness to take flight. Surprised by two small cockers in a marshy and sedgy reed-bed, tufted with aquatic plants, it ran before them, and after some time was observed to spring up and fly into a matted clump of reeds, where it appeared so fatigued as to allow itself to be captured by the hand.

Habitat—Northern Africa.

Species 175.—Baillon's Crake.

Crex Baillionii. Selby.
Poule d'eau Baillon. Temm.

The rarest in its occurrence of the entire family of the Rallidæ, this beautiful little crake has only occurred in a single instance, and is in the possession of the same gentleman to whom we are indebted for the first notice of the squacco heron occurring in this country.

Obtained in a bog at Clay Castle, near Youghal, in Cork, in a situation so favourable to its appearance that the spotted crake had been obtained on two occasions, it was captured in October, 1845.

Its habits are believed to be similar to those of the two preceding species.

Habitat—Southern Europe.

Genus XC.—Gallinula (Water Hen).

Species 176.—The Water Hen.

Gallinula chloropus. Lath.
Poule d' eau ordinaire. Temm.

Moor Hen.

The Water Hen is a common species, and one widely distributed over the island, in any locality suitable to its habits.

Not particular in its choice of place, it indifferently betakes itself to the river-side, or the wet bottoms of the hedgerow. Its favourite haunt, however, is the vicinity of the mill-dam, few of which, no matter how closely they approach the city, are untenanted by a pair.

Leading us gradually from the swimming form of the Waders to the more complete form of the Natatores, entirely adapted to the water, we see the water hen living for the most part upon the water, yet possessing, in the highest degree, the characters of the order to which it belongs, in its motions and habits when on land. Although of plain, unobtrusive colours, the water hen is yet a handsome species;

the exposed crimson-red plate on the forehead, and the jerking of its short tail, contrasting with the white feathers to the best advantage.

Possessing, even in its wild state, habits of tameness, which by attention may be increased to familiarity, we have seen on many occasions this species frequenting the outyard of a large mill situated at Island Bridge, upon the Liffey, there feeding contentedly and picking up seeds, as much at home as any of the fowl into whose vicinity and domain it had intruded.

Very common about Dublin, we have many times received its eggs from the neighbourhood of the many mill-ponds about the city. In one instance nine eggs were obtained in the nest, and were so far advanced that, being wrapped in flannel, and placed in a warm situation, six of the nine produced birds.

Possessing habits of great interest, the appearance of a troop of water hens along the picturesque scenery which, in most cases, fringe the rivers frequented by them, render them at all times an object worthy, not only the attention of the ornithologist, but of the merest lover of nature. Thus we have many times observed this bird along the fine, picturesque, wood-fringed river-side of the Liffey, between Lucan and Palmerstown; sitting lightly and buoyantly on the water, it jerks itself forward with the neck gracefully erected, and the little white tail-patch jerking up with each paddle of the foot. When alarmed, it seeks the shelter of the overhanging bank, and remains until all symptoms of danger have passed by. Indicative of its approaching affinity to the swimmers, we see (like many of the true ducks) the attempt to escape by diving, which is so eminently possessed by this species.

Indigenous.

Species 177.—The Purple Water Hen.

Gallinula martinica.—Gmelin.
Poule d' eau martinica.

Were this the only North American species which had ever been obtained upon our coasts, we might feel some reluctance in allowing it the position it holds in our Fauna. But when we have instances before us of the American bittern and cuckoo, we can have no reason for not admitting the species to our Fauna.

The present specimen of the purple gallinule was found lying dead in a ditch near the village of Brandon, on the sea-

shore near Kerry, and came under the observation of Dr. Williams, of Dingle, in a recent state.

This rare species was first noticed by its present possessor, Richard Chute, Esq., of Blennerville, county of Kerry.

Habitat—North America.

Genus XCI.—Fulica (Coot).

Species 178.—The Baldcoot.

Fulica atra. Linn.
Foulque macroule. Temm.

Black Diver. White-faced Diver.

This fine-looking bird, reminding us by its general shape and fulness of form of the ducks, is rather sparingly distributed over the island, and that generally in retired localities. Affecting and resorting to the sides of rivers and large pools, its most favourite haunt is the neighbourhood of those lakes with which the island is so picturesquely studded. Nearly similar in habits to the water hen, we observe the baldcoot sailing on the surface of the water with the same light and buoyant motion that so much distinguishes that species. At all times in summer, and occasionally in winter and spring, we hear it emitting its loud and piercing cry, which has been likened to the sound of a trumpet.

When alarmed, we see an attempt made at concealment, by diving and swimming under water to the projecting shelter of whatever herbage may be in its vicinity; also, when pursued by dogs, it in most cases trusts only to its powers of diving to elude pursuit.

During winter the baldcoot deserts the residence it had occupied in the summer, and appears off the coast in small flocks, diving and displaying all the habits of the true ducks in their natatorial powers. Well known to the inhabitants of the coast at that time, they are indifferently termed white-faced and black divers; but, from the coarseness of their flesh, are generally secure from the skill of the duck-shooter, whose shot is seldom thrown away upon chances not profitable.

When observed on the wing, which is but seldom, the coot flies heavily, with the legs dangling and hung out behind.

A nest which we examined in aquatic herbage, on a little island in a mill-pond near Dublin, appeared so very large and cumbersome in its structure as to have suggested the idea of its being used yearly as a breeding site; and fresh material worked in upon the old decayed plants, forming the nest of

preceding years. From its unusual dimensions it appeared a good load for a wheelbarrow. The young of the baldcoot, like those of the water hen and crakes, run about immediately after escaping from the shell.

According to Degland, we are informed of a curious yearly battue of coots which takes place in the north of France on the approach of winter. The birds being collected in great numbers, preparatory to seeking a more southern temperature, offer such inducement to the shooter, that 800 or 1000 coots have been obtained in a day.*

Becoming tame and familiar in confinement, coots were well known to the ancients, who kept them in their houses as pets, and believed them to have a peculiar mode of drinking, by soaking the foot in water and raising it to the bill.†

Indigenous.

ORDER V.—NATATORES (SWIMMING BIRDS).

FAMILY XXXII.—ANSERINÆ (GEESE).

Genus XCII.—Anser (Goose).

Species 179.—The Gray Lag-Goose.

Anser ferus. Selby.
Oie cendree ou premiere. Temm.
Wild Goose.

The Gray Lag, or, more correctly, the gray-legged goose, is, with the exception of the Canada goose, the rarest in its occurrence in our island. Of large size, and resembling some specimens of the domestic goose in appearance, it is believed to have been the original species to which we are indebted for our common farm bird. More unusual in its occurrence in England than in our own island, Mr. Yarrell remarks of its appearance in the London markets, "that now whole winters pass away without a single example."

From our notes of the occurrence of this species, from 1845, in the Dublin markets, and elsewhere in the island, we are induced to give the average as about three birds to each two

* Ornithologie Européenne. † Pliny.

years of that time,—having in one year known as many as five to have been obtained, and after that an interval of some years to elapse before their re-occurrence.

In Mr. Thompson's work we find an interesting notice of a colony of these birds, which were introduced some 120 years since on a lake at Castlecoole, county of Fermanagh, and where, since that time, they have preserved their original habits, nidifying and rearing their brood with all the habits of wild birds, and at times so numerous, that during some years they have numbered as many as 100.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Species 180.—The Bean Goose.

Anser segetum. Gmelin.
Oie vulgaire ou sauvage. Temm.

Wild Goose.

Smaller in size than the gray-lag, this species appears to be rather widely distributed over the island, and is one of the earliest of the family in making its appearance with us.

Rare in its occurrence in Scotland, the pink-footed goose (a species which as yet has not occurred in Ireland) appears to have taken its place, a matter of considerable surprise to the ornithologist, when we remember that the bean goose, in its migrations to and from Ireland, in all probability passes over a considerable portion of Scotland.

Appearing at the commencement of winter in small flocks, we at times discern them flying in the vicinity of Dublin Bay, and during severe winters remaining the entire season in its neighbourhood. Having observed many specimens shot during various winters along the range of the Dublin mountains, we conjecture that they remain there during the day, and on the approach of evening take up some station in the Bay of Dublin. However, the principal and well-ascertained haunts of the bean goose are the bogs of the interior, which afford them both a cover and a protection from the gun of the sportsman. From these situations they sally on the approach of twilight in long lines, clamorously calling in their flight towards the vicinity of young planted fields of wheat or oats existing in their neighbourhood, where they sometimes commit considerable depredations and injury to the crop.

In severe weather they frequent live springs, or drains not hardened by the intensity of the frost, where they are obtained by lying in wait for their appearance, and at times so

successfully, that we give an instance which occurred to the notice of Mr. R. Glennon.

"A countryman in the county of Longford having observed, for several successive evenings, a large open drain regularly frequented by flocks of these birds, felt sadly perplexed for the want of a gun either to beg or borrow, until at last he recollected the existence of an old Spanish gun, which had remained a fixture under the thatch for one half century at least; it was immediately taken down, minus lock and stock, and fastened upon a piece of timber hardly suited for the purpose. Having all in readiness, the same evening he was creeping cautiously against the wind, toward a bank he had erected in the drain; succeeding in reaching it, the barrel was quietly rested upon it, and a piece of lighted touch-paper (tinder) applied to the touchhole, when, to use his own words, 'she went off beautifully,' so much so, that eleven geese were lying dead and dying in the drain, whence all were carried to his cot in a sack which had been brought for the purpose."

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Species 181.—The White-fronted Goose.

Anser erythropus. Linn.
Oie rieuse ou à front blanc. Temm.

White-faced Goose. Laughing Goose. Tortoiseshell Goose.

The White-fronted Goose, with the exception of the brent, is the most common in its occurrence of all our Irish Anserinæ, and is also that species which furnishes the greatest proportion to the markets; the early occurrence of which furnishes the newspaper editors with the announcement of "symptoms of a severe winter," as the first coming of some few flocks of these geese are always duly chronicled.

Our own knowledge of the white-fronted goose is only obtained from the appearance of those occasional flocks which we see assuming so many changing and beautiful appearances in their aerial flight, and passing early in winter towards the bogs of the inland counties, in most cases attracting attention by their clamorous calling, for which reason they are indebted to their other common name of laughing goose.

On one occasion, near the Dublin mountains, a large flock, consisting of some fifty or sixty individuals, attracted the attention of our party by their loud, confused calling; and, whether from association, or their unexpected and beautiful appearance in the V-shaped flight assumed by many water-

birds, all agreed in the wild beauty of the call-note as it was gradually lost in the distance. Like the bean goose in appearance, it bears a resemblance to it in habits, and commits the same havoc during early morn on the newly planted grain.

Of the true wild geese, this is the most beautiful in plumage,—some adult birds, with the richly mottled marking on the abdomen, almost justifying the name given it by the dealers of wild fowl, of "tortoiseshell goose."

Like all of the Anserinæ, the white-fronted goose thrives well in confinement.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Species 182.—The Bernacle Goose.

Anser bernicla. Flem.
Oie bernache. Temm.

White-faced Bernacle. Norway Bernicle.

This very beautifully-marked species is the most local in distribution, and one of the most uncommon in its occurrence of the family to which it belongs. Rarely observed in our bay, we have abundant testimony of its rarity over the island, from appearing so very seldom in the markets of the city during winter.

Only on one occasion has the bernacle come under our observation, in January, 1850, when a flock, consisting of twenty birds, passed closely overhead in the vicinity of the Pigeon House Wall, all calling in unison; the sound was singularly pleasing, resembling some distant murmuring.

Differing from the preceding species, we might class the bernacle and brent goose as sea-geese, to distinguish them from the more inland habits of the others: as neither of those birds, unless on very rare occasions, are obtained inland.

Characterized by the most watchful and vigilant habits, when flying from the bay or neighbourhood of the shore, they invariably repose upon any exposed sand-bank which may appear to view, and are only to be obtained by "scrapes" and "blinds," or barrels sunk in the ooze in the direction in which they fly to and from their feeding stations.

It may not be unworthy of remark, that this species was that which the earlier naturalists selected to apply the legend declaring it to be produced from trees overhanging the sea, growing in the remote Hebridal islands,—an idea which was at one time widely and permanently disseminated; it being also believed that each extremity of the branch contained a small, round-shaped ball, which, when sufficiently ripe, dropped from the

root into the sea, and after immersion re-appeared on the surface of the water a complete bernacle. However, if they chanced to fall upon the soil or rocks below, they shrivelled up, and, alas! for the poor bernacles, they never came to life. Another age, of equal intelligence, chose the Cirrepede adhering in clusters to decayed timber and the bottom of ships to be the germ of the bernacle. And, strange as it may appear, this idea is still preserved by the fishermen living around our coasts.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Species 183.—The Brent Goose.

Anser brenta. Fleming.
Oie cravant. Temm.

Barnacle.

Of all the Irish Anserinæ this species is the most widely distributed, occurring in some localities in the greatest possible abundance.

The smallness of size and bill, when compared with the true wild geese, and the smooth feathers of the neck, have induced many to believe they indicate a close affinity to the duck tribe, for which reason some authors have removed them to a sub-genus, "Bernacla."

We may observe that the common name for this species in Ireland is the barnacle, a name entirely erroneous, as the preceding bird, differing in size and marking, is named the barnacle. However, in some parts of the coast the differences are understood, and they are respectively known as "Wexford barnacle" and "Norway barnacle."

It is strange that it occurs with us in a similar manner as in England, frequenting chiefly the eastern coasts, their place being supplied on the western coasts of both countries by the true bernacle. The talented author of "Wild Sports of the West" mentions the brent occurring in flocks of hundreds, while the bernacle occurs in such numbers as to blacken considerable extents of strand. If we but substitute brent for bernacle, we have a correct estimate of their numbers on our eastern coast.

In the depth of winter their appearance on the coast causes the entire shore to seem alive. The same locality which a few months previously was almost deserted, except by a few shore-birds, or the vociferous screams of a flock of "silver-winged" terns, all becomes transformed. The zephyr is

changed to the rude and chilling chorus of Boreas; the cloudless sky of summer is replaced by the dark and rolling forerunners of the tempest; the surge rolls with redoubled violence, and the snowy locks of the breakers are hurled high in the furious war of elements; we can dimly discern through the foggy air large black masses of immense extent, scarcely to be distinguished from clouds, varying in appearance with every blast; the unaccustomed ear is at once struck with the hoarse and loud cries proceeding from those countless multitudes; the loud, prolonged whaup of the curlew, the incessant clamorous calling of the geese, and the shrill and peculiar whistles of the duck tribe, coming distinctly though the frosty air, all tend to produce in the hearer a wish to become more versed and accustomed to the habits and manners of those migratory wanderers.

With the exception of the Wexford and part of the Louth coasts, we are aware of few localities on the eastern coast where the brent goose occurs in such numbers as frequent Dublin Bay during severe weather; flocks of which during some previous years we have seen numbering many thousands, all—

> "Watchful and agile, uttering voices wild
> And harsh, yet in accordance with the waves
> Upon the beach."

The extreme limits of an island opposite Clontarf we have seen at times almost black with numbers of these birds.

On the approach of spring they return to their native home, and their wild and musical cries have often attracted attention when pursuing their aerial journey over the houses of the city:

> "Ranged in figures, wedge their way,
> Intelligent of season, and set forth
> Their airy caravan. High over seas
> Flying, and over lands, with mutual wing
> Easing their flight. The air
> Floats as they pass, fanned by unnumbered plumes."

We might also observe the markets of Liverpool, Manchester, and Edinburgh, are supplied with a small proportion of the brent goose, obtained by night shooting in Ireland.

On some parts of the Wexford and Dublin coasts they are shot from "scrapes" (sand dug up in the neighbourhood where the geese feed, in the hollow of which the shooter lies). When an opportunity arrives the shooter fires at the farthest off, in order that the dropping shot may wing the nearest

geese when rising: the number brought down by a single discharge is often surprising; and few have rendered themselves so remarkable for this as the Wexford men, the "long Shelmalier" used by them being peculiarly adapted for wild-fowl shooting: and unfortunately, as experience proved, equally capable of doing the same execution on many of the loyal contemners of the "wild geese" of a former day.

It is, however, by the swivel gun and punt that the great numbers sent to the British markets are obtained.

But yet occasional successes have their drawbacks, as a correspondent's letter from Carlingford, on the subject, remarks:—"After waiting nearly five hours unsuccessfully, I consoled myself with Maxwell's remark, 'All the shooter has to rely upon is patience and a long barrel.' Patience, thought I,—time 12, a sleeting shower, and a wind cutting like a knife.—Patience! My appearance might have been picturesque, but I assure you it was the antipodes of pleasant."

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Species 184.—The Canada Goose.

Anser Canadensis. Stephens.
Oie de Canadé. Temm.

This fine-looking species there is considerable doubt in admitting to a place in our Fauna, from the opinion that the specimens obtained in various parts of the island may have escaped from confinement in England, and been shot when appearing upon our shores.

However, concurring in the opinion expressed by Thompson, we think it a species more likely to have crossed the Atlantic than those which have occurred, not so well adapted for a long flight as the Canada goose. In a conversation with Dr. Farren of this city, respecting one of these birds preserved in his collection at Feltrim, and which had been shot at Balbriggan, after being closely watched for two days before an opportunity occurred of shooting it, he fully concurred in this opinion respecting its perfectly wild state.

Several other specimens have either been observed* or shot in the island, amongst which four birds which settled down in a locality perfectly in unison with the character they assumed for a short time—the ornamental waters of the Zoological Gardens, in the Phœnix Park. Also in 1846 a fine specimen

* Thompson.

was obtained on the Bandon river near Kinsale, which was accompanied by five others, all of which appeared during a severe snow-storm. The specimen was since presented to the Museum of the Dublin Natural History Society, by R. P. Williams, Esq., of Drumcondra Castle.

In confinement this species looks to the best advantage, and thrives well, breeding familiarly with the tame goose; it is also a species frequently observed on ornamental waters, and nowhere more so than with the other aquatic water-fowl at St. James's and Regent's Park. There is also a considerable number on the grand canal before the Palace of Versailles, where we have been amused by their following the pleasure boats with the greatest familiarity, to partake of a hard bread which is made purposely, and disposed of in the Park, both for their and the fishes' benefit.

Habitat—North America.

Species 185.—The Egyptian Goose.

Anser Ægyptiacus. Linn.
Oie Egyptienne. Temm.

The Egyptian Goose is, in like manner, of doubtful occurrence, as to whether the few birds which have been obtained were wild visitants from Africa, or birds escaped from confinement.

The most elegantly plumaged of all the Anserinæ when appearing with them on ornamental waters, none of the species we have already described can equal the present in the varying and resplendent hues of the richly bronzed plumage. Occurring in two or three instances, in one of which as many as eighteen birds were observed on the wing, we can scarcely believe them to have escaped from confinement, especially when we recollect the similar appearance of a flock of eighty of these birds observed at Hampshire in England.

Domesticated at an early period in considerable numbers by the Egyptian priests, with the exception of the sacred ibis, it is one of the birds most frequently observed amidst the effigies and hieroglyphics of the monumental remains of that country.

Habitat—Northern Africa.

Genus XCIII.—Cygnus (Swan).

Species 186.—The Hooping Swan.

Cygnus ferus. Ray.
Cygne à bec jaune ou sauvage. Temm.
Wild Swan. Hooper.

The Hooper is only an occasional winter visitant to our shores, and is very irregular in its appearance, some years, perhaps, elapsing before a specimen may occur, and again during other winters as many as five or six appearing in the markets, and in the possession of the taxidermists of the city.

Magnificent and stately in appearance, the hooper occupies the same position among the Natatorial birds as the eagle with the Raptores, or the crane with the birds composing its own order.

Beautiful in plumage, the entire of which is of a pure unsullied white, the hooper yields to none of our birds, indigenous or migratory, for the interest attached to it. Of considerable size, an adult female whose dimensions were taken by the author had an extent of wing equal to eight feet, with a length from bill to tail of five. Thus the appearance of a flock of these birds might indeed excite the attention of the most unobservant. Flying at a considerable altitude in the air, and with great rapidity, from the large expanse of wing, they in most instances attract attention by their modulated and musical hooping cry as it comes distinctly down to us from the upper air mellowed by distance:

> "So the white swans from the firmament swoop,
> With their gong-throated queen,—a beautiful troop,—
> Wheeling gracefully earthward, and floating as though
> The young winds were wooing fair cloudlets of snow."

When thus observed in flocks they are either formed in a lengthened line, or in the wedge-shaped figure in which swans usually fly.

On the authority of Mr. R. Glennon, towards spring the small lakes in the county of Mayo are tenanted by flocks of these birds congregated there preparatory to their return to those regions of snow to which their plumage accords, and approximates so chastely in appearance. And, strange to say, although they occur in considerable numbers at that time, they are never interfered with or molested by the peasants of the

neighbourhood, on account of a tradition that the souls of virgins(?) who, whilst living, had been remarkable for the purity of their lives, were after death enshrined in the form of these birds, as emblematic of their purity and beatitude; for this reason they remain in safety, as it is also believed that whoever would be so unlucky as to meddle with them would pay for his temerity by the forfeit of his life, ere the year had elapsed.

Invested with many notices of interest from the earliest ages of antiquity, the fabled melody of the dying swan is applied indifferently to this or our better known species, the mute swan. Whence it originated we have no opportunity of ascertaining, although we find the observation current amongst the earliest of the Greek writers. Æschylus, in a passage descriptive of a female character, remarks:

> "She, like the swan
> Expiring, dies in melody."

In Ossian our notice is attracted by a similar passage:—"Sweet was her song, as the voice of the wounded swan, when she sings away her soul in death, and feels in her breast the fatal dart of the hunter."

It need be scarcely remarked that modern research has sufficiently disproved the fable.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Species 187.—Bewick's Swan.

Cygnus Bewickii. Yarr.
Cygne de Bewick. Temm.

Wild Swan.

This species, smaller in size, and characterized by the same spotless plumage as the preceding, is the more common of the two species occurring in Ireland; few winters passing without their being observed in the markets of the city, or noticed in the columns of the provincial papers of the day.

Overlooked in its specific distinctions till within the last few years, this species was for a considerable time confounded with the hooper.

Similar in habits to that bird, during winter the inland lake or estuary on the sea-shore is indifferently chosen, where they present a like appearance when on the water, by the long neck being in most cases held stiffly upward, without any of that graceful bend which renders our domestic swan so

remarkable, adding in such an eminent degree to the picturesque, whatever water they adorn with their presence.

Beautiful as are the appearance of many birds,—the eagle by the hill-side, the heron by the mountain rivulet, or the gannet plunging for his prey amidst the depths of the ocean,—yet the appearance of the tame swan, when—

> "With arched neck
> Between her white wings, mantling proudly,
> Rows her state with oary feet,"

is a sight at all times gaining the attention of the many.

Obtained occasionally in the immediate vicinity of the city, two instances occurred to our notice,—one shot at a small stream in the Phœnix Park, and another, in our own collection, observed for some weeks frequenting the Bay of Dublin, accompanied by four others, all, from their excessive wariness, admitting of no approach; until one morning, when the present specimen was obtained near the island of Clontarf, by T. Massey, Esq., of the Pigeon House Fort, with a rifle-ball, shot from a punt, in the year 1829.

In no instance at the present time found nidifying in Ireland, that such was the case at a remote period there is very little doubt; as from an instance of an egg of the hooper, presented to the author by an old ornithological friend, who remarked its having been taken from a nest some ninety years since, in the rushes of Portumna.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

FAMILY XXXIV.—ANATIDÆ (DUCKS).

Genus XCIV.—Tadorna (Shelldrake).

Species 188.—The Ruddy Shelldrake.

Tadorna rutila. Pallas.
Canard kasarka. Temm.

This species, rare as it is beautiful, has only occurred in a single instance, obtained on the Murrough of Wicklow, in the summer of 1847, and now preserved in the collection of T. W. Warren, Esq., of this city.

Of great rarity in Western Europe, but three specimens are recorded to have been obtained in England. Of its habits in its own country little is known, except that it is be-

lieved to nestle in holes of trees, or burrows of animals, where it lays eight or nine white eggs.

Habitat—Asia.

Species 189.—The Shelldrake.

Tadorna vulpanser. Flem.
Canard tadorne. Temm.

Bardrake. Burrow Duck.

This showy and elegantly-marked species, with its bold, decided colours of bright green, orange, and unsullied white, all chastely disposed, is, perhaps, the most beautiful in appearance of our native Anatidæ; and is rendered peculiarly interesting to the ornithologist, from the fact of its being one of the few birds of the family to which it belongs that is indigenous, and found during all seasons around our shores,—on our eastern coast, however, it is a species sparingly distributed, and very rarely obtained, either by the taxidermists of the city, or by the hawkers, who eagerly watch for its occurrence in the markets.

At one time more plentiful in its distribution, the sand-hills between Howth and Lusk were known to be tenanted during the season by these birds for the purposes of nidification. In a conversation with an old peasant, who resided in the village of Portrane (and to whom the birds were well known), he described them as breeding in small parties from two to a dozen along the sand-hills, in suitable situations, and that it was no unusual occurrence for the "boys" (i. e. men) to appoint Easter Monday for the purpose of digging out from the burrows the eggs, or, in some instances, the parent birds, whose escape had been prevented, by the entrance of the burrow being closed with hay and sand placed there the preceding day; as late as 1842, a nest was obtained containing seven eggs, all of which my informant described as being successfully hatched and reared under a domestic duck, and disposed of to admirers in Dublin for good prices.

During winter the shelldrake collects in small flocks, and seldom ventures inland, but frequents the open sea or estuaries along the coast. On the approach of spring they break up into pairs, and seek the sand-hills bordering the sea, frequented by rabbits, where their burrows, in the soft sandy situations chosen by them, are nearly eight or nine feet in depth, and where they succeed in rearing a numerous brood in this unusual site.

On the authority of James M'Cullogh, Esq., a gentleman who has had frequent opportunities of observing these birds along the sand-hills of the Murrough of Wicklow, where they breed in considerable numbers,—we are informed that the shelldrake never ventures to leave its burrow except at early dawn or twilight, when it may be observed skimming close to the sands on its way to feed, after the receding tide; and that he has never heard their peculiar whistle until the young are hatched, when it is made use of in alarming and directing them from danger. Its most common name here, and also upon the Dublin coast and markets, is bardrake, perhaps a corruption of the more probable name, burrow drake.

On one occasion we observed the shelldrake in its wild state—a flock of nine birds floating on the water between Howth and Kingstown, a place where subsequently a single bird was observed swimming during unusually heavy rain by Joshua Lamprey, Esq.

Indigenous.

Genus XCV.—Anas (Duck).

Species 190.—The Mallard.

Anas boschas. Linn.
Canard sauvage. Temm.

Wild Duck.

Of nearly equal interest to the ornithologist, the mallard is another of our indigenous ducks; and although its numbers are considerably augmented during winter, by the arrival of flocks from their northern resorts, yet it cannot be doubted, if sufficient accommodation for their nidification were obtainable, the mallard would be yet more common in our island during summer.

Possessing additional interest from the fact of its being the original from which our domestic duck is derived, the mallard is a common species, and although not occurring in such numbers as the widgeon and pochards, yet it is a widely-spread species, and at all times commands the highest price for the acknowledged delicacy of the flesh, its average value being from four to five shillings a pair.

More abundant in England at a former time, no less than 4000 mallard appeared at Archbishop Neville's feast, where they were valued at twopence each, about half the value affixed in those days to the teal.

During winter we observe this species in Dublin Bay in flocks varying in numbers from ten to one hundred. Extremely restless, they impart considerable animation to the appearance of the bay by their constantly varying appearance in flight. Rising, when not alarmed, from the surface of the water in a "long string," regular in order, one never attempts to rise until the preceding bird is on the wing, when they form a beautiful appearance, either in the long extended line, or the V-shape which is frequently assumed. One flock of these birds observed flying over the Pigeon House Wall, at a very moderate distance from the road, exhibited a very beautiful sight; each bird seemed, from its closeness to the one preceding, as if its bill rested on the tail of the other. On our proximity being observed, the effect was singularly fine: the entire flock, without the slightest break, shooting upwards, and the call-note of danger ringing out clearly from the first old mallard, and passing in regular succession along the line.

Retiring inland on the approach of spring, they occupy bogs, or any deserted locality affording them protection for their young. In those places they obtain food by the river-side, or on the lakes of the interior, where their appearance adds highly to the picturesque:—

"Oft as the sun's last lingering ray
Gleams faintly o'er the fading scene,
By some still lake I bend my way,
Where, decked in plumage brown and gray,
The mallard oft is seen;
With glossy neck of emerald hue,
And wings barr'd with the deepest blue
That sapphire gives; and ruddy breast,
By the clear, dimpling waters prest;
To sedgy covert, swimming near,
Where, on her nest, of rushes made,
His mate, in humbler garb arrayed,
Broods o'er her eggs, with anxious care."

More observable when the cares of the breeding season are concluded, the young are captured in considerable numbers, and are designated "flappers." This species is also observed frequenting ditches and drains in the enclosed country during severe weather; and in the county of Dublin, both in winter and in autumn, they are obtained by dogs trained for the purpose.

Indigenous.

Species 191.—The Common Teal.

Anas crecca. Linn.
Canard sarcelle d' Hiver. Temm.

The beautifully marked teal, the smallest of the ducks occurring in our Fauna, is equally remarkable for the elegance and neatness of its form as its chastely disposed plumage. Occurring in considerable numbers, we may at all times remark it during winter, either in small flocks scattered along the shore-line of the Dublin coast, or in pairs upon the sides of inland rivers. Attractive in both situations, the teal admits of a nearer approach than any of our other wild fowl, and in its habits is the most familiar of all the Anatidæ. Although on the sea-shore, from frequenting the company of widgeon and other ducks, it adopts to a considerable degree their watchful and wary habits, yet, when observed in its more accustomed haunt by the river-side, or on the inland lake, it is always approachable, and when alarmed never leaves the neighbourhood, but again settles at some distance further off. For this reason, and requiring but a slight charge, it offers a greater inducement to the sportsman than the more watchful mallard. With the teal we also observe the beautiful evolutions of the flocks when on the wing, perhaps exceeding all our water-birds by their constant variation, and of which few sights afford a greater attraction than their appearance, disporting themselves in the upper air, with the few occasional rays of the autumnal sun glancing upon their plumage,—

> "They tempt the sun to sport amid their plumes."

This beautiful appearance has been noticed by many of the old writers, amongst whom, Drayton :—

> "Ye see the lesser dibbling teale,
> In bunches with the first that fly from mere to mere,
> As they above the rest were lords of earth and ayre."

We find also many notices of "teylles" in the olden records, where they appear not so highly valued as the delicacy of their flesh deserved.

Breeding in limited numbers in Ireland, the same causes of drainage and improvement which have effected the decrease of the bittern and mallard, by depriving them of retired and suitable places in which to nidify, have likewise had a similar effect upon the teal. Yearly on the decrease, at the present time it occurs in much more diminished numbers than some fifteen or twenty years since.

Their eggs we have received on several occasions, from different localities, in the counties of Meath and Kildare. Some young which had been successfully reared under a domestic hen, by a hawker of wild fowl in the city, exhibited a most amusing appearance. On the entrance of any person into the room, all paddled and scampered to the shelter of several old hats, where other birds had been reared, and, hiding themselves in the moss covering the bottom, they believed themselves sufficiently safe when the head was concealed, forgetful that the body was observed paddling away on the outside; all the birds exhibiting a strange appearance from their diminutive size, and the brightness of their rat-like eye, whose young they appeared to resemble, more than those of the elegant little teal.

Indigenous.

Species 192.—The Gargany.

Anas circia. Linn.
Canard sarcelle d' ètè. Temm.

The Gargany, similar in size to the teal, is another beautifully plumaged duck, but one of the greatest rarity in its occurrence, seven or eight specimens being the utmost we can reckon of its occurrence in our Fauna.

Two specimens of the gargany have passed under our observation: one, an immature male, obtained in the vicinity of Dublin during the autumn of 1850; and the other an adult male, shot on the river Fergus, in the county of Clare, at present in our own collection.

Obtained only while migrating over Europe in its summer migration to its northern breeding haunts, they are of considerable rarity in that continent; although, on the authority of a taxidermist, of considerable practice on the Boulevard des Italiens, in Paris, we were informed that it occurs in France during summer, as he occasionally obtained specimens to "set up" at that season; and during some years it is not unfrequently exposed in the markets of the capital.

Habitat—Northern Africa.

Species 193.—The Pintail.

Anas acuta. Linn.
Canard à longue queue. Temm.

Sea Pheasant. Ladybird.

The Pintail, uniting grace and elegance of form with a subdued and elegantly marked plumage, is not inferior in beauty

to any of the Anatidæ; and, although not actually rare in its occurrence, it is not a common species, as the teal or pochard. Found in limited numbers and distribution, its principal haunt on the Dublin coast is at Malahide, or occasionally the "Gut" or estuary of Baldoyle (a narrow estuary, fed by a river, and frequented by curlew in immense flocks). However, we are supplied principally with birds captured in decoys, or shot upon inland lakes, and forwarded for sale in the Dublin markets. Remarkable for its elegant appearance, none of the duck tribe can lay claim to the same perfection of shape that distinguishes the pintail, so much as to have obtained it the appellation of "sea pheasant," and from the dealers in Dublin the complimentary title of "Ladybird." Not often observed in confinement, we had much pleasure in greeting its appearance, with other aquatic fowl, in the collection at the Jardin des Plants at Paris.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Species 194.—The Gadwall.

Anas strepera. Linn.
Canard chipeau ou ridenne. Temm.

This rare species, the most unobtrusive in plumage of all the family occurring on our shores, is a species only occasionally obtained; although we have seen at least one specimen every year with the various hawkers of wild fowl.

Habited in such sombre plumage, the male gadwall might agree with the general dull plumage which we find characterizing all the females of the duck tribe.

Occasionally appearing in small flocks, an adult male, in our own collection, was shot, out of a flock of five, whilst flying past the wooden bridge at Clontarf, in the winter of 1845. Another specimen, a female, was selected from two more of the same species, offered for sale by a hawker in the winter of 1849, all of which were described by him as having been obtained on an inland lake.

Of its habits we know comparatively little, excepting its powers of diving when in search of food, witnessed by Sir W. Jardine in Holland, where they occur in considerable numbers upon the meres, and from which locality Mr. J. J. Nolan, of Bachelor's-walk, has frequently imported living specimens for ornamental waters.

Habitat—Eastern Europe.

Species 195.—The Shoveller.

Anas clypeata. Linn.
Canard souchet. Temm.

Shovel-bill. Shelldrake.

This interesting species is of rather unusual occurrence, and is more often obtained in the dull, unobtrusive plumage of the young, than with the rich and varied markings of the adult male.

Seldom observed upon the sea, the shoveller is an inland species, and frequents the rivers and lakes of the country, from which localities the individuals exposed for sale in the markets of the city are, in most instances, obtained, being captured by decoys.

The shoveller attracts the attention of the ornithologist and every admirer of the scientific economy of nature, by the beautiful natural mechanical arrangement, or laminated process of the curiously shaped bill, each mandible furnished with a comb-like edge, fitting into each other in the most perfect manner, and used when feeding as "strainers" to separate the mud from whatever food it may contain.

Remaining in some instances after the great majority of its family have regained their native wilds, we have observed its occurrence very late in the season; and from having at one time obtained an adult female in the month of August, we noticed the probability of its nidifying in our island to Mr. Thompson, in which that eminent naturalist coincided at the time. Since that period we find notes of the occurrence of a beautiful adult male, shot in rushy pasture grounds near the Bog of Allen, and also two immature plumaged birds, offered for sale on the 2nd of September, 1852, by a hawker, who remarked their unusual occurrence, and their appearance to resemble young birds bred in the country.

The flesh of our shoveller is extremely delicate, and we can fully appreciate the American sporting proverb, that "no one should pass a shoveller to shoot a canvass back;" so much so that we appropriate to this species the praise bestowed by Mundius on the teal: "That it was sweet in the mouth, light in the stomach, and withal very nourishing."

Few subjects are of more interest to the ornithologist than the occurrence of species in their relative numbers in different countries, as we find instanced in the present species occurring more plentifully in Ireland than in England, whilst in Scotland it has never been obtained. Strange, that in the

latter country it should not be at least more common than in our island, where, doubtless, the birds passing to and from Ireland in their migrations might be supposed to rest and remain for a short time.

Habitat—Eastern Europe.

Species 196.—The Widgeon.

Anas Penelope. Linn.
Canard siffleur. Temm.

Golden-headed Widgeon. Whistler.

With the widgeon we have another example, like the teal, of a beautifully plumaged bird very common in its distribution, but differing from that species in never remaining in the island during summer.

Occurring in flocks of considerable extent, the widgeon is the most plentiful of all the Anatidæ, and during winter we may at all times discern them in small detached flocks in our own bay, increasing in number on the coast line upwards towards Drogheda, their principal station being at Malahide, a locality admirably suited to their habits, and at all times frequented by them.

Picturesque in their appearance on the water during high tide, a flock consisting of some four or five hundred birds affords a fine sight to the observer, almost every bird resting with the head under the dorsal plumage, and rising and falling with every motion of the water; at times also we see them entering the harbour, the heads of all the birds turned in one direction, and allowing themselves to be drifted towards the shore by the motion of the tide, but, watchful of danger, on approaching within a sufficient distance, they rise and wing back to a greater distance, pursuing the same course until the tide falls, during which time they remain stationary by swimming against it.

Well known to all persons living in the vicinity of the coast, the widgeon attracts attention by its loud whistling call-notes uttered during night-time whilst on the wing.

These call-notes are extremely beautiful, and when heard at an elevation of some hundred feet overhead, the birds themselves invisible in the darkness of night, each bird chorussing its long, inspiriting note, whilst the loud, ringing sound of their pinions come clearly distinct to the ear, have caused it to receive the common name of whistler in every country where it is known. Nor is this beautiful effect peculiar to the shore, but even in the most central portion of the popu-

lous city the call-note of the widgeon is heard during night-time. As remarked in a note furnished to Mr. Thompson's work, flocks of wild fowl pass regularly over the houses, particularly in early winter and spring. Between 10 and 11 o'clock on the night of the 20th of March, large flocks continued passing for nearly three-quarters of an hour, the loud, clear calls of which afforded evidence of their species; at other times in the same situation the "whaup" of the curlew is of common occurrence; and on one occasion, in November, 1852, the loud hooping call-note of the wild swan rang out clearly and distinctly in the silence of midnight. These cries are familiar to those whose avocations lead them to be out of doors at the time of flight, particularly to the police force of the city, many of whom remark the passage and calling of "wild geese," to which birds the sounds are attributed, birds rarely ever known to us as occurring at night-time over the city.

Whether these birds be attracted by the glare of gas-light in the city we know not, but it is certain many ducks and smaller birds have been obtained by striking themselves violently against the glass of lighthouses, attracted from a distance by its brightness—an occurrence noticed by Longfellow in his work:

> "The sea-bird, wheeling round it with the din
> Of wings, and winds, and solitary cries,
> Blinded and maddened by the light within,
> Dashes himself against the glare, and dies."

From the observation of Mr. John Hill, who has had many opportunities of remarking their habits, and who has used the swivel gun to a considerable extent upon their flocks in Dublin Bay,—the usual mode of proceeding adopted is to move silently towards them at early dawn in a punt, at the western end of the island at Clontarf, where they are usually congregated, and having approached sufficiently near to fire, sometimes with such effect that as many as twenty or twenty-five birds have been obtained by the one discharge; after the report of the swivel the flocks become so wild that for that day all further approach would be impossible.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

FAMILY XXXV.—FULIGULINÆ (SEA DUCKS).

Genus XCVI.—Fuligula (Pochard).

Species 197.—The Scaup Pochard.

Fuligula marila. Stephens.
Canard milouinan. Temm.

Bridle Duck. Black-headed Diver.

This species, characterized by the large, heavy form distinguishing the pochards from the compact elegance of shape which we observe in the true ducks (as the widgeon and teal), is common in its occurrence, and is found during winter frequenting the entrances of large rivers and estuaries, or in situations, as at Malahide, where beds of shellfish afford them sufficient food by diving, and sandbars exposed by the tide allow a secure resting-place from danger.

The scaup affords a small proportion to the numbers of teal, widgeon, and common pochards, which principally stock the markets during winter; and in the adult plumage of both sexes is seldom observed, the immature birds forming nearly nine-tenths of the numbers obtained.

Rarely frequenting inland waters, the scaup is eminently a sea duck, and at times is observed at a considerable distance from land, as in the instance of a flock remarked by J. M'Cullogh, Esq., consisting of 1000 or 1300 birds, nearly fourteen miles from land, on the Wicklow coast, all of which exhibited the greatest tameness, not rising until within a short distance of the cutter in which our informant was. During the severity of winter the scaup duck ventures closely on the shore, so much so, that we have observed small flocks and single birds floating unsuspiciously in the neighbourhood of the Lighthouse situated at the end of the North Wall, and similarly at the embankment at Clontarf, and from both places successful shots are known to have been obtained at them from land. The scaup exhibits a fine example of the beautiful minute markings peculiar to the birds of this family.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Species 198.—The Tufted Pochard.

Fuligula cristata. Selby.
Canard morillon. Temm.

Tufted Duck. Crested Diver. Whitesided Duck.

This beautiful duck, smaller in size than the scaup, and possessed of a more graceful form, is at once distinguished as the only species of the Anatidæ frequenting our island possessing a crest. More common in occurence than the preceding, the tufted pochard is also more widely distributed, and appears not to be so essentially maritime in its habits, but frequents occasionally inland rivers and lakes, from which situations we have frequently known them to be obtained for the Dublin market.

Formed and adapted in a peculiar degree for its manner of living by the broad flattened shape of the body, the tufted duck is an expert diver, swimming lightly and buoyantly on the water, and, when occasion requires, sinking so low as to hide the white plumage of the side from view (which we see generally shown on ordinary occasions), and to expose only a slight line of the back over the surface.

Richly marked in its plumage, with the richly glossed purple of the head and neck, and the gracefully curved crest, the tufted duck is a species possessed of considerable attractions, and is one appearing to the best advantage on ornamental lakes. On one occasion we had the pleasure of observing three detached flocks, averaging from fifteen to twenty birds in each, accompanied by equal numbers of the golden-eyes, floating with the tide at the Bar of Dublin; and very beautiful they appeared ranged in line seven or nine abreast as they entered the mouth of the harbour, so motionless in appearance, and rendered so conspicuous by the contrast of two or three adult male golden-eyes in each flock; or at times when a herring-gull or kittiwake settled down into the midst of the flock and joined their company.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Species 199.—Redheaded Pochard.

Fuligula ferina. Selby.
Canard milouin. Temm.

This unobtrusive species, possessing none of the beautiful attractions that distinguish the two preceding birds, is the most common of all our maritime ducks upon the eastern coasts

of the island, and in the markets of the city, occurs in a proportion of three to one of any other species, the widgeon excepted.

In Dublin Bay it appears during the season in considerable numbers, but rarely in large flocks, a number of small detached parties being in most cases observed.

When the tide is out on the Clontarf strand this species may be frequently observed on the extreme edge of the water, extended in a long line, walking slowly, and carefully searching and taking up whatever food is obtained, with the same jerking motion of the head remarked in the domestic duck.

On one occasion, in the winter of 1852, five flocks, averaging twenty-five birds in each, were observed extended in the same single line, and from their motions apparently employing their limited time to the best advantage, when suddenly the loud whistle of an approaching train along the embankment echoed loud and shrilly in the frosty air; immediately small flocks of redshanks and knots scattered over the strand, took to wing, uttering their alarm-cries; but on the pochards it produced no effect, for they continued feeding without the least alarm, excepting some three or four birds which raised their heads to see if there was any danger, and not observing any, relapsed again into their previous downward position.

Occasionally remaining late in the season, we have noticed the occurrence of single birds during April, and on two occasions, of specimens shot early in May; one female in our collection being obtained on the 30th of that month.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Genus XCVII.—Clangula (Garrot).

Species 200.—The Golden-eye Garrot.

Clangula vulgaris. Leach.
Canard garrot. Temm.

Golden-eye Diver.

This species, the most beautiful of the entire family of the maritime ducks, is rather common in its occurrence, but, similar to the scaup duck, is rarely obtained in the elegant and varied plumage of the adult male, the proportion being nearly forty immature birds to a single mature bird.

In our own bay it is rarely observed, although small flocks mixed up with other birds are occasionally met with, ap-

pearing more plentifully at the principal haunt of wild fowl on the Dublin coast,—Malahide, a locality where all the visitants frequenting our waters during winter appear to form a complete garrison, and detach flocks from their main body to Dublin Bay and the surrounding estuaries.

Frequenting indifferently the coast line or the inland lake, the great majority of the golden-eyes brought for sale to the markets are obtained from the interior, where they are said to be captured by decoys, of which fact we have at times sufficient proof in the dislocated necks of the various birds taken by the decoy man.

The golden-eye is singularly expert at diving, and seldom attempts to escape, like the widgeon or mallard, by trusting to its powers of flight, but instantly on perceiving danger dives, and if observing the same appearance on emerging again dives, and so on after coming up, increasing the distance from the suspicious object at each immersion by its progress under water. From this habit they are well known on the coast by the name of divers, by which name all the ducks frequenting the sea are known, with any other distinguishing appellation, as black divers, golden-eye divers, &c.

The golden-eye is, perhaps, as elegant in appearance as any of the richly marked ducks we have already described, and though we see none of the delicately minute markings so beautifully exemplified in the teal and scaup duck, or the great variety of colours as in the shoveller and widgeon, yet the golden-eye duck is singularly attractive, its rich glossy-green head and neck, broken on each side of the bill with an oval white spot, together with the peculiarly glossy and silky white plumage of the under parts, render it one of the most beautiful of the entire Anatidine family.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Genus XCVIII.—Harelda (Hareld).

Species 201.—The Long-tailed Duck.

Harelda glacialis. Selby.
Canard de miclon. Temm.

Northern Hareld.

The Long-tailed Duck, reminding us of the teal in its diminutive size, is only an occasional winter visitant, and when occurring appears to be a species well distributed round the coast, as specimens from the south, east, and western shores of Ireland have come under our own observation. In the winter

of 1848 an adult male was shot in Dublin Bay at Clontarf; and the same year an immature female was found dead near Dollymount, having probably perished from the effects of a previous gale. Of the greatest rarity in the summer, we are indebted to Mr. R. Glennon for the notice of its first occurrence, having observed in his establishment an adult male in the peculiar plumage of the summer; we were informed that it had been obtained out of a flock of thirteen birds, on the estate of Sir Robert Gore Booth (where specimens had been previously obtained in winter), in the west of Ireland. The entire flock was described by the gentleman who obtained the male bird* to have presented quite a familiar appearance, and to have attracted him to the little cove where they were swimming by their wild musical cries. On the coast of Achill, visited by Mr. Glennon in the winter of 1852, flocks of these birds were observed, and several immature birds were obtained. Occasionally specimens in adult plumage have been noticed in the fresh-water lakes of the country.

Of the habits of this interesting bird we know comparatively little, the only reason we can assign being its rarity upon our coast. A bird well known to the voyagers in the northern regions, it has been noticed by them as occurring in great numbers along the Arctic regions of the northern hemisphere. To the natives of the islands in such latitudes it is also well known, being named by them the calloo, from its loud and agreeable call. On the second voyage of Captain King, whilst taking observations in Kamtschatka, a duck of beautiful plumage was described, having a singular and beautiful call, consisting of three distinct notes rising at equal intervals above each other, and called by the natives "a-an-gitche," which, in all probability, is the long-tailed duck.†

The food is taken by diving, and consists of shell-fish and molluscæ, and occasionally small fish, in consequence of which the flesh has a disagreeable and tough taste.

This species selects for a breeding place the large inland fresh-water lakes of the northern continents, on the banks of which it constructs a large loose nest, in some instances lined with down; the eggs are small and of grayish-white colour.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

* In the author's collection. † Cook's Voyages.

Genus XCIX.—Oidemia (Scoter).

Species 202.—The Surf Scoter.

Oidemia perspicillata. Selby.
Canard marchand. Temm.

This fine-looking species, so interesting to the ornithologist from the extraordinary appearance of the beak, is a bird of the greatest rarity in its occurrence in our island, only a single specimen having been obtained, for a notice of which we are indebted to Mr. Thompson's work.

"A beautiful adult male of this species was shot at Ballyholme, Belfast Bay, on the 9th of September, 1846, by Snowden Corken, Esq. It was alone, about two hundred yards from the shore, allowed three shots to be fired at it before attempting to dive, and was killed at the fourth or fifth shot, on reaching the surface after having dived. Two of these birds had, a day or two before, been observed in company in the same locality, and one individual was seen several times in the course of a few weeks after the subject of this notice had been killed. It is at present preserved in the Belfast Museum."

Habitat—North America.

Species 203.—The Velvet Scoter.

Oidemia fusca. Fleming.
Canard double macreuse. Temm.

Double Scoter. Black Duck.

The Velvet Scoter is another example of the same style of colouring, and the protuberance of the bill in a lesser degree than that which distinguishes the preceding species.

Occurring in limited numbers along various parts of the coast at feeding stations situated at a considerable distance from land, and from being but rarely observed, like those species which might be more correctly classed as shore ducks, to distinguish them from the essentially maritime habits of the scoter, the velvet duck appears of more rarity than it really is. Feeding upon molluscæ, which are obtained by diving, it is rarely tempted to approach the shore, but remains at all times remote from observation and danger.

Of rare occurrence along the Dublin coasts, where it has never come under our observation, it appears, on the authority of Robert J. Montgomery, Esq., to be a frequent

visitant to the Bay of Drogheda, where several very beautiful specimens, in the plumage of the adult, have been obtained by that gentleman.

Mr. R. Glennon, when in Achill, observed the velvet duck during winter frequenting the Sound of Achill and the Galway coast, and could at all times distinguish them from the flocks of common scoters by the white patch on the wings. Their powers of diving were also remarked to be extremely interesting. In one instance, where a flock of twenty birds occurred, not more than eight or ten could be observed at any one time, the remainder being immersed in the water searching for food.

The velvet scoter is a bird of extreme beauty, although not possessed of any varied distribution of colouring, or any elegance of form; the deep bluish-black of the plumage is so soft and glossy in texture as to have obtained for it the appellation of velvet, and, contrasting in an admirable manner with the white patch on the wings, and a spot of the same colour under each eye, renders it, from its unusual appearance, a singularly handsome species.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Species 204.—The Black Scoter.

Oidemia nigra. Selby.
Canard macreuse. Temm.

Black Diver. Black Duck.

This species, smaller than the velvet duck, appears to be more widely distributed, and the most common of the scoters frequenting our eastern coast. Not so often found in localities similar to the preceding, we observe the black scoter occasionally venturing into our bays and estuaries, and in deep water off the shore line. Thus, on several occasions, with the aid of a telescope, we have observed flocks of those birds, averaging from five to twenty, busily occupied diving, and at times resting in the most complete security, with the head placed under the dorsal plumage, along the coast between Merrion and Kingstown, and in a similar manner at Malahide and Skerries. It is also a species, during winter, venturing in to seek the security of the bay, and at such times may be observed floating on the water opposite Clontarf, where they are well known by the appellation of "black divers," and "black ducks."

At times instances of the black scoter occurring inland have come under our notice, from specimens obtained on the river Liffey, and on the Shannon near Athlone. One instance

is noted of their occurrence in small flocks on the inland lakes. Yet, more unusual, on two occasions this scoter has been shot whilst apparently searching for food along the bottom of wet ditches and open drains, one of which was obtained at Beggar's Bush, near Dublin, and preserved by Mr. Glennon, on whose authority they occur at Achill, and along the west coast of Ireland.

The scoter exhibits the same unusual appearance as the velvet duck, with this exception, that no single spot of white occurs on the entire of the deeply glossed bluish-black of the plumage.

Rarely obtained in the Dublin markets, its occurrence is limited to an occasional immature male or female, habited in dull unobtrusive plumage. Very common upon the French coasts during winter, we are informed by Degland that they are captured in hundreds, and forwarded to the French markets, where they are much esteemed as an article of food.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Genus C.—Somateria (Eider Duck).

Species 205.—The Eider Duck.

Somateria mollissima. Leach.
Canard eider. Temm.

St. Cuthbert's Duck.

We have already remarked the preceding genus as interesting to the ornithologist, on account of the various protuberances appearing on the bill. With the present genus we find it more so, the base of the bill being swollen and enlarged to a much greater extent.

Of large size, and clumsy, ungainly shape, the eider duck nearly equals the brent goose in size, and is of singular beauty in its plumage, the unusual colours of which nature, perhaps, intended as a recompense for its awkward form.

The present species is one of extreme rarity in its occurrence, four or five instances alone being noticed of its capture, two or three of which have come under the observation of Mr. R. Glennon. Another specimen, an adult male, was captured alive by Mr. John King of Bremore, Balbriggan, who, attracted by the size and unusual plumage of the bird when struggling to get up some rocks, launched a boat and secured it. On examination it was found to have received a severe injury; it is now preserved in the fine collection of Dr. C. Farran, of Feltrim.*

* Thompson.

To this duck we are indebted for the eider down of commerce, so remarkable for lightness and elasticity, and obtained from the nest of the bird, having been plucked from her breast to serve the purposes of lining; and on this account the birds are protected along the Norwegian isles, which they frequent for breeding. At one period existing in considerable numbers at the island of Lindisfarne, it received the familiar appellation of St. Cuthbert's duck, named after the saint who lived there.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Species 206.—The King Eider.

Somateria spectabilis. Jenyns.
Canard à tete grise. Temm.

King Duck.

The King Eider, whose bill is more extraordinary in appearance than the preceding, has on each side of the base a large oval protuberance, of a rich vermillion red when newly killed. Of similar rarity, it has only occurred in four instances, one of which was shot at Kingstown Harbour, in the county of Dublin, about the 1st of October, 1837, and came into the possession of Mr. R. Ball a few hours after. When first seen it was accompanied by two others. The specimen is now preserved in the University Museum, Dublin.* Two others were subsequently obtained by Robert Chute, Esq., one from Tralee Bay, and the other from the neighbourhood of Derrynane, county of Kerry.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

FAMILY XXXVI.—MERGANSERINÆ (MERGANSERS).

Genus CI.—Mergus (Merganser).

Species 207.—The Smew.

Mergus albellus. Linn.
Harle piette. Temm.

White Nun. Magpie Diver.

The Smew, or White Nun, as this species is commonly denominated, presents one of the most beautiful appearances of any of the birds comprising the family.

* Thompson.

The most common of the Merganserinæ in its occurrence on the eastern coast and the inland lakes of the island, it has occurred to our notice in a proportion of 3 to 2 of the red-breasted merganser.

Irregular in its appearance, it sometimes occurs in considerable numbers; and, again, some years may elapse without a single specimen being obtained.

In the winter of 1847 so plentiful were they, that a hawker of wild fowl brought five for sale, three adult birds, and two immature; and on the same day we observed in the markets three additional immature birds, also an adult male in the possession of Mr. Glennon. As well as could be ascertained from inquiries at the time, all had been obtained inland on the fresh-water lakes, as were also two in our own collection, an adult male captured on the lake at Knockdrin Castle, county of Meath, and a female shot on the Grand Canal at Phibsborough.

At times observed on the sea-coast, a specimen (at one period in the possession of W. R. Massey, Esq., of the Pigeon House Fort) was shot in the winter of 1830, which exhibits an appearance seldom observed of the male bird, partly in adult, and partly in immature plumage.

On the extreme west coast of Ireland the smew has been obtained in some few instances, and forwarded to Dublin for preservation.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Species 208.—The Hooded Merganser.

Mergus cucullatus. Linn.
Harle couronné. Temm.

This North American species has occurred in two instances in our island, one of which was shot, about the year 1840, at Dingle Bay,* on the coast of Kerry, by Dr. Chute, and the other an immature female† in the collection of Sir R. Levinge, Bart., Knockdrin Castle, county of Meath, obtained on the lake in the vicinity.

Very common in its American distribution in winter, it ranges through the United States, and during spring breeds in the vicinity of Louisville, placing the nest in hollow trees; but further north, where those are wanting, the ground is resorted to.‡

Habitat—North America.

* Thompson. † Glennon. ‡ Audubon.

Species 209.—The Red-breasted Merganser.

Mergus serrator. Linn.
Harle huppè. Temm.

Sawbill Widgeon. Bardrake.

This elegantly marked species, attractive by the rich vermillion of the bill and feet, is a resident during all seasons in our island, but receives considerable additions during winter, forced by the rigours of northern latitudes to seek shelter and sustenance upon our shores. Widely distributed over the island, it has occurred to our notice in Dublin Bay, and to that of Mr. Glennon on the extreme west coast, whilst they occur equally plentifully north and south of the island. Appearing in very limited numbers, it frequents the adjacent coasts more than the vicinity of our own bay. Being scattered sparingly during winter along the shore between Howth and Lusk, and on the south side between Bray and Kingstown, where it attracts attention by its form and plumage, and is well known upon these coasts by the name of sawbilled widgeon.

On the authority of an ornithological friend, a flock, consisting of fifteen of these birds, was observed during summer frequenting daily a small cove on the Galway coast, and from inquiries they were believed to nidify on some of the lakes in the neighbourhood, as they were observed morning and evening flying in a "string" or line to and from the direction of the fresh-water lakes. Described by our informant as presenting an exceedingly beautiful appearance whilst feeding on the water, swimming gracefully, and diving with the greatest rapidity over a sandy shoal where sand-eels were known to frequent in abundance, their appearance was enhanced by flocks of "jourougs" (common terns), all screaming the incessant call peculiar to the terns whilst feeding, and each instant some of the flock flashing in the air, and disappearing under the water in the midst of the mergansers. To the fishermen in the vicinity they were well known by their familiar name of sawbills.

Indigenous.

Species 210.—The Goosander.

Mergus merganser. Linn.
Harle grand. Temm.

Dun Diver.

The Goosander, the rarest of our three mergansers, is, as the smew, only a winter visitant, but occurs in much more

limited numbers than that species. Rarely obtained, an occasional specimen in the unobtrusive plumage of the female may appear in the markets of the city, but, very irregular in their occurrence, a period of ten years often elapses before they are again remarked, and then, as if making amends for their long disappearance, they occur in large flocks widely dispersed over the island. Thus, in the winter of 1849, as many as eleven of these birds were received by Mr. Glennon, all of which were obtained on inland lakes and rivers. At the same season a richly coloured adult male and a female came into our own possession, shot out of a flock of twenty birds on the Shannon, near Limerick; other birds were obtained on small mountain lochs in Wicklow, and on rivers in the south of Ireland.

One pair shot by a gamekeeper were described by him to have been much annoyed by moor buzzards whilst on the water, both birds diving to avoid them when stooped at. When newly killed the adult male of this species exhibits a very beautiful appearance, in the admirable contrast of the rich buff orange colour of the breast and abdomen, with the velvetty black mantle, and the vermillion of the bill and legs. The females of this family exhibit nearly as uniform an appearance in the dull and unobtrusive tints of their plumage, to all of which the name of dun diver has been indifferently applied.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

FAMILY XXXVII.—COLYMBIDINÆ (DIVERS).

Genus CII.—Podicipinæ (Grebes).

Species 211.—The Tippet Grebe.

Podiceps cristatus. Selby.
Grebe huppè. Temm.

Crested Grebe.

Of the various natatorial tribes found tenanting the inland lakes and seas around our island, none are so deserving of attention, or so interesting in their habits, as the curious family of the grebes. The backward position and curious structure of the feet, the flat, compressed shape of the body, and the shortness of the wings (which in a great measure forward their sub-aquatic evolutions), together with the fact

that the contents of the stomach is usually found augmented by a mass of their own feathers, perhaps render the family the most interesting of all our aquatic birds.

The crested grebe is not an uncommon species in Ireland, and perhaps occurs in greater numbers than in either of the sister kingdoms, in consequence of the greater number and extent of lakes, marshy grounds, and other suitable localities adapted to its habits. Seldom observed or captured in the vicinity of the shore, it frequents the neighbourhood of large rivers, lakes, and sometimes artificial waters.

Six specimens of the tippet grebe, obtained in various localities in the island, and in our possession, exhibit the different changes from the immature plumage of the young to the richly crested birds of the breeding season. One of those obtained in February, 1848, on a river in Kildare, exhibited so curious a change of plumage in the entire breast, being spotted with black, and the tertials with round spots of a similar colour, that we forwarded it (through the kindness of Dr. Frere of London) to W. Yarrell, Esq., for his critical examination, the purport of which, expressed in a letter to us, was, that it was an immature bird in a very unusual stage of plumage.

In consequence of the backward position of the feet, these birds exhibit an exceedingly awkward motion when on land, walking forward with difficulty for a few feet, and then suddenly squatting down, although several living ornithologists have denied the grebes the power of walking, and only allow them the capability of shuffling along like a seal.

We have observed, on several occasions, both the crested and little grebes walk for a short distance equally as well, and more upright, than many other natatorial birds. However, it is only on the water the peculiar powers of this species are brought into action. Quick and vigilant in all its motions, it is almost an impossibility to procure a specimen; as the least noise causes it to dive and re-appear at an almost incredible distance, when the head is slightly exposed over the water. As an instance of the difficulty, Mr. Selby mentions once giving chase to a crested grebe on one of the small lakes near Rotterdam, which occasioned an hour and a half's severe exertion to approach within range of gunshot, although the boat had the assistance of a sail with a fair wind, and was manned with able and accustomed rowers. Of the majority of the specimens we have examined, the greater part were obtained by wounds in the head and neck.

The locality chosen for nidifying by the crested grebe is

the vicinity of close, impervious reed-beds, and other luxurious aquatic herbage. The nest is composed of decayed plants, reeds, and grasses. Exceedingly large and bulky in structure, it is sometimes destroyed by the sudden overflowing of the lake or river in the vicinity. The eggs are very much elongated, and average from two to four in number, in colour greenish-white, but more usually dark brown, caused by the colouring properties of the decaying herbage. The inside of the eggs, when their contents are emptied, exhibit a rich and beautiful green.

A habit of this bird, and of the water hen, consists in covering the eggs with flags and reeds when the female leaves the nest to obtain food, from which cause the old writers on natural history believed that the eggs were hatched by that means, the fermentation of the herbage causing such an increase of temperature as to hatch them.

On the approach of the breeding season we observe a considerable increase of those nuptial plumes about the neck for which the entire family of grebes are remarkable, and from which ornament no less than three species derive their name —the crested, horned, and eared grebes.

To this beautiful bird the fair sex are indebted for a peculiar and elegant resemblance of fur, for which reason it is well known to furriers as the "tippet grebe," the silvery and glossy skin of the breast alone being used for that purpose. Ireland, however, furnishes but a small number, the majority being procured from the northern parts of Europe and America. Commonly exposed for sale by the furriers of the city, they are said to have been obtained from Switzerland, on the lakes of which country they occur in considerable abundance, and are much sought for, as we are informed by Degland,—a bird sells at Geneva for six or eight francs.*

Although from their general appearance the grebes could not be expected to possess any great means of flight, yet they fly with great rapidity, using quick, short flaps of the wings; and by Audubon, in America, they have been observed proceeding through the air in flocks of from five to fifty.

The food of this species consists of small fishes and frogs, with a large proportion of colcopterous insects and small river shell-fish, all of which are found in the stomach, intermingled with the feathers of the bird.

Indigenous.

* Ornithologie Européenne.

Species 212.—The Red-necked Grebe.

Podiceps rubricollis. Latham.
Grebe jou gris. Temm.

The Red-necked Grebe, very limited in its occurrence, has only been obtained in four or five instances in different portions of the island, all of which were procured, for the most part, during severe weather, or after the prevalence of easterly winds.

Two of those coming under our own notice, one in the collection of T. W. Warren, Esq., of this city, obtained in Wexford, and the other in immature plumage, shot on Sandymount marsh, near Dublin, after some days of intense frost, on the 26th of January, 1848, is preserved in our collection. The irides of this specimen exhibited a curious departure from the prevalent red colour observable in the other grebes, being in the present instance of a bright primrose yellow. On dissection the stomach was found without any of the usual lining of feathers, and contained only a slimy matter of a brilliant green colour.

In England this species is also of great rarity, and, as in our island, is only a winter visitant.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Species 213.—The Horned Grebe.

Podiceps cornutus. Selby.
Grebe cornu. Temm.

Dusky Grebe.

This beautiful species, in the rich plumage which distinguishes it during the breeding season, has never been obtained in Ireland, its occurrence being limited to its occasional appearance in the unobtrusive garb of winter. Similar to the tippet grebe, we observe the same unsullied whiteness of the plumage of the breast and abdomen, and the contents of the stomach filled in like manner with the feathers of the bird.

Of considerable rarity, the occurrence of the horned grebe is extremely irregular, many birds appearing during one winter, and a length of time elapsing before they are again observed. Like the red-necked grebe, it is also an attendant upon the rigours and severity of winter, as three specimens purchased by ourselves from the hawkers of wild-fowl, during

different years, were either after the continuance of snow or frost, and in all instances were obtained in the inland lakes and rivers.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Species 214.—The Eared Grebe.

Podiceps auritus. Selby.
Grebe oriellard. Temm.

Dusky Grebe.

The elegantly formed eared grebe is almost of equal rarity with the red-necked, having only been obtained in seven or eight instances, two of which occurred in the attractive and richly coloured plumage of the summer: one of these was shot by C. Cottrel, Esq., on the Royal Canal, near Dublin, in the month of June, 1847; it subsequently came into our possession through the kindness of Mr. R. Glennon, to whom that gentleman presented it. The contents of the stomach, which we examined in company with Mr. Thompson, exhibited a most beautiful appearance, and on comparison with thirteen stomachs of different species examined at the same time, the present one was entirely filled with the remains of coleopterous insects, which glittered in the brightest manner through the sand and feathers it contained; at the time of capture two large beetles were found in the throat. Its motions in the water were described by the shooter as both graceful and elegant, diving with the utmost rapidity of motion, and remaining a considerable time beneath the surface.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Species 215.—The Little Grebe.

Podiceps minor. Jard.
Grebe castagneux. Temm.

Dabchick. Black-chin Grebe.

This little species, the smallest of the family, and the most common in its occurrence, is a resident during all seasons, frequenting pools near rivers, mill-ponds, and common on all the lakes of the island.

Attracting no attention by any elegance of form or colouring, the little grebe is as unpretending as it is unobtrusive, and from its aquatic life and the timidity of its habits is but rarely noticed by the casual observer.

Indifferent to locality during winter, it appears in Dublin Bay either singly or in pairs, and ventures close to the

shore. One of its most favourite haunts in the neighbourhood of Dublin is along the Liffey between Palmerstown and Lucan, where in summer it breeds under the sheltered aquatic herbage afforded by the banks. We have also observed pairs during summer frequenting the delightful scenery of the Boyne, between Slane and Beauparc, where they appear wild and easily alarmed, from the boatmen passing on the neighbouring canal pelting them with clods of turf.

Several instances of this interesting little bird in confinement have come under our notice, two specimens, which were for a short time in the possession of Mr. Glennon, and one in our possession, purchased from a fisherman who entangled it in his net, afforded the greatest amusement by its curious habits. Becoming in a short time very tame, when placed upon a tub of water it dived, and disported itself as well as its limits permitted, and captured, without any exertion, the minnow which had been placed for its food, at last becoming so familiar as to look upward when the fish was suspended by the tail, and diving after it when it entered the water; when lifted out it paddled along the floor in the most amusing manner, after every few feet traversed squatting down to rest; no way timid when placed on the breakfast table, it never attempted to move until taken away to enjoy its morning bath. Leaving shortly after for England, and fearing some casualty might happen to our amusing pet, we presented it to Dr. Ball, for the Zoological Garden, Phœnix Park.

With the little grebe we seldom observe any feathers in the contents of the stomach, like those of the preceding species; in the stomach of one, presented by a friend, we found as many as five perfect specimens of the shell *Paludina tentaculata* (*P. impura*, Lam.)

Very common on the lakes in the county of Mayo, several ornithological friends have been considerably amused by observing its habits in localities* where, although not molested by man, its powers of eluding attention are exerted to the utmost in evading the clutches of its determined pursuer, the hen-harrier. This hawk has been repeatedly observed skimming along close to the water, and attentively watching the appearance of one of these birds, which it no sooner does than, approaching as near as possible, it stoops downwards to the place where the dabchick has just dived to avoid its enemy; still fancying the bird there, the legs of the hen-harrier are often lowered in the water as far as the tarsi, after which it

* Talbot Jones, Esq.

again observes the grebe at some little distance, when the same scene is enacted, until the spoiler wings away disappointed in its object. At other times a pair of hen-harriers endeavour to weary out a water-hen or dabchick, by striking at it each time it emerges after diving.

Indigenous.

Genus CIII.—Colymbus (Diver).

Species 216.—The Red-throated Diver.

Colymbus septentrionalis. Linn.
Plongeon cat marin ou à gorge rouge. Temm.

Galrush. Speckled Diver. Second Speckled Diver.

The Red-throated Diver, the most common of the birds composed in the family, is a regular winter visitant to our shores, and usually appears towards the end of October in the Bay of Dublin. Widely distributed around the bays and estuaries of the island, it occurs in considerable numbers on the east and western coast of Ireland, and in favourite situations may constantly be observed whilst feeding or swimming.

The most favourite haunt of the red-throated diver in Dublin Bay is the vicinity of the Poolbeg oyster-bank, a locality situated within a short distance of the roadside leading to the Pigeon House Fort, and where one or two pairs may be observed at all times. Heedless of the inclemency of the weather, we have observed them diving, and successfully fishing during a heavy fall of snow, and apparently took as much pleasure as if they were enjoying the warmth of an autumn sun, in which they also delight. At times so eager in the pursuit of its finny prey as to venture up rivers deepened by the accession of the tide, it disregards the falling of the water until the shallows become exposed, when its large size, and hurried impatience to regain the deep water, attract an observation fatal to itself, as in two instances red-throated divers were killed under similar circumstances upon the Dodder river. In one instance the "galrush" (local name) was pelted to death by boys who forded the river and prevented all passage downwards, the bird endeavouring to escape by diving, and never once attempting to take wing. Frequently entangled in the fishermen's nets whilst pursuing its prey, a very beautiful specimen at one time in Mr. Glennon's possession, and in the plumage of the second speckled diver, was thus captured, and exhibited considerable tameness, allowing the body to be stroked with the greatest fami-

liarity, and never attempting to strike with the bill, or to utter any cry.

Having on two occasions observed birds of this species on the wing, few exhibited an appearance so ludicrous,—the long neck, as in a similar manner to the cormorants, being held stretched out from them in the stiffest manner possible.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Species 217.—The Black-throated Diver.

Colymbus arcticus. Linn.
Plongeon lumme ou à gorge noir. Temm.

Lesser Imber.

This beautiful species, in the adult male plumage, is by far the rarest of the divers in its occurrence in Ireland, only two instances in that stage of plumage having been obtained. Of nearly equal rarity in the plumage of the lesser imber, one specimen was obtained in the winter of 1831 by Dr. J. D. Marshall on Lough Neagh, accompanied by two of the red-throated species, also obtained: they were remarked by that discerning ornithologist to have been very tame when compared with brent geese, cormorants, and other sea-fowl.*

In October, 1850, we succeeded in obtaining a fine specimen in similar plumage, which was shot between Howth and Kingstown, after an arduous chase from where it was first observed in Dalkey Sound. The marking of the neck differs from Dr. Marshall's specimen in being closely mottled with black, the feathers when raised showing deep black underneath. On examination of the contents of the stomach, it contained the remains of sprats and other small fishes. The flesh, a portion of which was cooked, was extremely well-flavoured, and differed considerably from that of the great northern diver, preserved at the same time by Mr. Glennon.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Species 218.—The Great Northern Diver.

Colymbus glacialis. Linn.
Plongeon imbrim. Temm.

Imber.

The Great Northern Diver, attractive both from its large size and elegant appearance, occurs very nearly in the same

* Thompson.

proportion upon our eastern coast as the red-throated diver, and appears similarly distributed upon the western.

Frequenting during summer and breeding for the most part along the ice-bound coast of Labrador and Iceland, it is only in winter that it seeks a refuge from the severity of those regions, and obtains the shelter afforded by our bays and estuaries.

Vigilant and shy, diving with celerity, and swimming with the utmost rapidity, its watchfulness seldom permits the near approach of any suspicious object, but it at once sinks partially and exposes only the line of the back and head over the water; if pursued it exerts its admirable locomotive power, and advances with immense speed, a consequence at which we need scarcely wonder when we recollect its adaptation to the element on which it lives. This beautiful adaptation we observe peculiar to the Divers in the flattened form of the body and the admirable mechanism of the foot, the membrane of which can be closed preparatory to each stroke, and the thin knife-like tarsi, which offer not the slightest resistance to impede its motion.

In Dublin Bay the great northern diver is a frequent visitant during winter, and there are few days that one or two may not be observed swimming and feeding similarly to the red-throated species. A very perfect adult male in our possession was captured on the Wexford coast after a "fresh" from the sea of two or three days' continuance; its captor observed it struggling in the breakers, and after many unsuccessful attempts to regain the deep water outside, it was flung exhausted upon the shingle of the beach, and expired after a few struggles. On dissection it was found to have been suffering from an internal wound previously received.

In conversation with Mr. Glennon on the occurrence of this species, we were informed that in the course of his practice he had received specimens which had been found dead in various inland situations, some at a distance of forty miles from the nearest sea; on the same authority several of these birds were observed rising from the water, apparently without the slightest difficulty, and flying with rapidity towards their great feeding station on the west coast at Achill Sound. A bird of this species at one time in the possession of W. R. Patten, Esq., of Galway, became so extremely tame as to allow of its being carried to a pond in the neighbourhood, where it dived and disported itself in the most amusing manner, in no instance ever attempting to molest the fish with which the pond was well stocked. Its cry was described

as a loud, melancholy wail, and heard at a considerable distance; it died, however, some time after from the effects of a wound received in the head.

The loud, howling cry of the northern diver has been noticed by many of its observers,* who have heard it during the day and at night-time. An ornithological friend† who visited the great Skellig Rocks on the coast of Kerry, during the autumn of 1850, described in a vivid manner the effect produced upon himself and the boatmen he had hired for the passage. On account of the wind blowing freshly off shore they had been belated beyond their expectations, which was furthered by its action against the long swell of the Atlantic rolling in shore its long, heavy waves. An old fisherman related the accident to a young lad who unsuccessfully endeavoured to kiss the cross placed upon a pinnacle of the rock, and who, failing in the attempt, was dashed to pieces upon the pointed crags below. As the fisherman ended, amidst the silence of the party, a loud thrilling howl sounded clear and distinct from the sea behind them, and, after a short silence, a similar wail echoed along the approaching shore, in all probability the mate of the first bird. The feeling that pervaded the party, although not fear, yet was so akin to it that not a word escaped from any until the boat was drawn upon the beach.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

FAMILY XXXVIII.—ALCADÆ (AUKS).

Genus CIV.—Uria (Guillemot).

Species 219.—The Common Guillemot.

Uria troile. Linn.
Guillemot à capuchin. Temm.
Foolish Guillemot. Sea Murre.

The Foolish Guillemot, as it is generally denominated, is abundant upon our coasts during summer, and is one of those species imparting the greatest bustle and life to the rocky headlands and precipices frequented by them. Thus, localities which a few weeks previously exhibited the utmost appear-

* Thompson; Macgillivray.] † M. F. Le Garde.

ance of bleakness, now teem with the animation produced by thousands of these birds.

Sitting closely along a ledge of rock, no matter how elevated over the sea, they impart all the appearance of being ranged in file; or, as they have been compared by the Manksmen, resembling an apothecary's shop,—the even ledges of the rock, the shelves,—and the birds, the pots; whilst on the least alarm the entire range of birds sweep downward in a line to the sea. Very common in Dublin Bay, we have on several occasions observed them during the dusk of evening, swimming without the least alarm amidst the vessels at anchor on the quays, and also in small parties, from five to a dozen, feeding about the entrance of the harbour. Such successful divers are they, and rapacious feeders, that twenty-five herring-fry have been counted in the contents of a stomach examined. Congregated in parties from eight to thirty, they evince the utmost amicability towards each other, fishing and winging their way in small flocks to and from their breeding haunts.

Around the Dublin coast they occur in considerable numbers, increasing as we approach their grand breeding places on the island of Lambay, where, occupying every flat ledge or table of the rocky face on the eastern side, their eggs are deposited upon the bare rock, and are collected by a man tied to a rope, or lowered over the cliffs in a basket, whence they are forwarded in small quantities for sale to the markets of the city. Of these we might remark Swift lost a subject in not having seen in his day a heap of guillemot's eggs, attractive from twenty varied colours, supporting the portentous announcement of an "arrival of fresh American turkey eggs, twopence each." If "murder could out" in that instance, the unfortunate birds, which in many cases were enclosed within the shell, would unanimously have repudiated their foreign appellation. On inquiry at one house where they were disposed of, we were informed that they were well liked, but were rather "strong"! or had the "tack" of the voyage. Described by Audubon, we have an excursion after the eggs of these birds,* where his boat returned laden with 2500 eggs, of which he writes: "They afford excellent food, being highly nutritious and palatable, whether boiled, roasted, poached, or in omelets." After such excellent authority we must allow at least the name "American turkey eggs"! to remain.

*Jardine.

During winter the guillemot occurs very sparingly upon the Dublin coast, and at that season appears wilder, and frequents the outside of the bay, which, perhaps, accounts for the number of those birds found in a dead state upon the coast after the prevalence of any gale of wind. During the same season single birds have been obtained by Mr. Thomas Watters along the Malahide strand, in every instance with the feathers and flesh of the neck picked completely off, but no other portion of the body injured. Whether this had been occasioned by the great black-backed gulls, which frequent this coast in numbers, or by fish, we were unable to determine, but in all probability it was the former.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Species 220.—The Bridled Guillemot.

Uria lachrymans. Yarr.
Guillemot bridé. Temm.

This rare guillemot, which the research of the last few years has separated as a distinct species from the common, is of great rarity in its occurrence, as only two specimens have been obtained in Ireland, one of which, shot at Dingle, county of Kerry, was obtained by Mr. Chute, of Blennerville,* and the other was shot by a boating party off the Giant's Causeway.†

In a conversation with William Yarrell, Esq., one of its first describers, he expressed his belief that both the bridled and thick-billed guillemots were occasionally to be found about the western coasts of our island, and escaped attention from their similarity to the common species; and although he had examined a large number of specimens obtained in various shooting excursions at one of their great breeding haunts, on the south coast of England, on the rocky cliffs of the Isle of Wight, he in no instance observed either species.

An allied species, the thick-billed guillemot† (*Uria Brünichii, Sabine*) is believed to have been recognised in flight at the caves of Ballybunian, on the coast of Kerry.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

* Thompson. † Ibid.

Species 221.—The Black Guillemot.

Uria grylle. Selby.
Guillemot á miroir blanc. Temm.
Greenland Dove. Rock Dove.

The elegant black guillemot differs considerably in its distribution from the common species, and is much more local and limited in its numbers.

Of rarity in its occurrence in Dublin Bay, we seldom meet with it until we approach Howth and Ireland's Eye, where it increases along the coast from pairs to small flocks, until we reach Lambay, where, from notes of their occurrence during various years, we estimate that between 100 and 150 birds annually incubate. The eggs we have never succeeded in obtaining from that locality, although Dr. Hans Lloyd, of Malahide, has informed us of having received eggs thence. With the quantities of guillemots' eggs, forwarded to Dublin from the west coast of Ireland, those of the black guillemot, or puffin, are very rarely observed.

At one time coasting the south-eastern extremity of Lambay, in the month of July, the boatmen directed our attention to a ledge occupied by nine rock doves, the local name of the species, which were described by our informants to have had nests in the clefts behind, it being a habit of the species to sun themselves after flying from the sea; their eggs were described as very difficult of access from the dangerous situations in which they breed. With the aid of a telescope their beautiful motions were plainly discernible, and admirable they appeared, their black plumage and white wing-patch contrasting with the reddish colour of the cliffs. A specimen shot the same day, in breeding plumage, exhibited a rich violet hue which overspread the entire plumage, in appearance similar to the roseate tint observable on *Sterna Dougallii* when newly killed.

On the west coast Mr. Glennon describes them as common, exhibiting the greatest tameness, diving almost under the bow and side of the luggers plying in the Sound of Achill. During winter it is never observed there, nor has it occurred to our own observation upon the eastern side, although by Mr. Thompson it was found, during all seasons, in the north of Ireland.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Genus CV.—Mergulus (Little Auk).

Species 222.—The Little Auk.

Mergulus alle. Jardine.
Macareux moine. Temm.
Rotche.

This species, although not of actual rarity, is one of unusual occurrence, and when obtained it is only after the prevalence of high winds or storms, when driven in to seek the protection afforded by the coast, which in most instances is useless, as they have usually been found dead in the most central portions of the island, remote from any sea, and killed by the violence of the weather.

Breeding in high northern latitudes, they occur in countless numbers, as at Spitzbergen, "supplying the ships' company with a variation of food," and described by Captain Beechy in his voyage to the North Pole:—"So numerous, that we have frequently seen an uninterrupted line of them, extending full half way over the bay, or to a distance of more than three miles, and so close together, that thirty have fallen at one shot. This living column, on an average, might have been about six yards broad, and as many deep. There must have been at least four millions of birds on the wing at one time."*

Very rare during summer, one instance obtained upon the Galway coast at that season, in adult male plumage, has come under our notice.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Genus CVI.—Alca (Auk).

Species 223.—The Great Auk.

Alca impennis. Linn.
Pingouin brachyptère. Temm.

This rare auk, reminding us by its appearance of those stately-looking penguins which frequent in such abundance the Antarctic islands of America, is of the rarest occurrence in our island, only two or three instances of its capture having been noticed. Of considerable size, its power of progression is limited alone to the water, the shortness of its wings rendering it incapable of flight; and from the backward position of the

* Jardine.

legs (or the entire tarsi on which it rests) it stands erect and stately. From a specimen obtained on the Waterford coast, we are indebted to Mr. Thompson for the following interesting notice:—"It was received by Dr. Burkitt, of Waterford, on the 7th of September, 1834, from Mr. R. Davis, Jun., of Clonmel, who stated it had been taken in the preceding month of May (by the fisherman from whom he purchased it), at a short distance from the shore, at the mouth of Waterford harbour, off Ballymacaw. According to its captor it was apparently almost starved. When in his yawl, off the coast, he saw the auk swimming about near him, and held out some sprats, for which it came close to the boat. It was taken with little difficulty. He kept it for some days, feeding it chiefly with potatoes mashed in milk, which were partaken of greedily. After having the bird for ten days he sold it to Mr. Davis, by whom it was sent to Mr. Gough of Horetown, county Wexford, where it lived for about four months. For a considerable time, perhaps three weeks, it was not known to eat anything at its new destination, but potatoes and milk were then forced down its throat, from which time it ate voraciously until the day before its death. This auk stood very erect, and frequently stroked its head with its foot, especially when any favourite food was presented. When in Mr. Gough's possession it was chiefly fed upon fish, of which fresh-water species (trout, &c.) were preferred to sea-fish; they were swallowed entire. It was rather fierce."

Breeding in remote northern latitudes, the eggs are obtained with great difficulty, and are of greater value than those of any species with which we are acquainted. Two observed in the possession of M. Lefebré, Quai Malaquai, Paris, were valued at 144 francs each (£6), and plaster casts, painted to resemble the original, were valued from ten to fifteen francs.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Species 224.—The Razor-bill.

Alca torda. Linn.
Pingouin macroptère.

The Razor-bill nearly equals the guillemot in its numbers and distribution around the shores of the island, and closely resembles that bird in habits, amicably frequenting the same ledge on the face of the rock, where it deposits its single egg, enormously disproportionate to the size of the bird, and often in situations at an immense altitude over the ocean. Inte-

resting in its habits from the associations connected with it, the razor-bill is an attendant upon the lofty precipices which occur around our island, and is equally abundant about the basaltic columns of the north as the granite ranges of the western coast. Observed and studied in their solitary breeding haunts, few can form the most remote idea of the magnificence which greets the observer in the neighbourhood of a breeding station. Flocks of various species, flying in long strings close to the water, and, rising on the wing as they approach the cliffs, all settle without the slightest noise; bending over, we observe them ranged in lines along each flat tabular projection, preening their feathers, and sitting upright hatching their single egg. The outer rocks at the base we observe white and spotless, covered with hundreds of sea-gulls, in such contrast with the black side of the rock, as it were overspread with snow, outrivalling the white foam of the waves which surround it; lines of cormorants stoop forward, in their peculiar manner of standing like so many projecting ornaments on a balustrade. There is no alarm or disturbance to intrude upon this carnival of the breeding season; but let a gun be discharged, and instantly the entire precipice seems alive: hundreds of guillemots, razor-bills, and puffins glancing downwards to the water, flocks of cormorants, with their long necks outstretched, fly off close to the water's edge, and settling down when sufficiently remote from danger; whilst at the same instant, like ten thousand snowflakes, kittiwakes (viewed from the distance above) wheel round in circles, their confused screaming scarcely distinguishable from the seething of the ocean. Overhead some patriarchal raven croaks hoarsely and angrily at our intrusion, whilst four or five kestrels appear on their motionless wings like so many fixed objects against the sky; each pinnacle of the rock is surmounted by a troop of jackdaws, their sidelong looks directed upon us, and chattering loudly, as if to silence the harsh grating cry of the starlings beside them.

Beautiful as such a sight must be, however imperfect in its description, it is pitiable when we reflect upon those solitudes invaded by boats full of persons who form parties to destroy those birds, offering neither an opportunity to display the skill of the shooter, nor, when shot, of the slightest value as an article of food. Unfortunately, never glutted by destroying, they cover the sea with their quivering forms, causing at the same time the loss of the lives of young depending upon the parent birds. Much as writers may object to the *battue* of game in an over-stocked preserve, yet there is a possible

excuse to plead in one case, as game birds are shot at a time when the young are not dependent upon them, and when shot are of value as an article of food.

Even were the habits of these birds otherwise than harmless, their wanton destruction is pitiable, and if a particle of the strictness extended over the care of a few game were used in the prevention of these excesses, all might be remedied, of which, as remarked in a correspondence with Mr. Thompson, the owners of rocky islets and headlands, where those birds frequent to breed, are highly culpable in permitting such slaughter upon their property, places where in a few years whole species will be extirpated, and known only as occasional visitants to the island.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Genus CVII.—Fratercula (Puffin).

Species 225.—The Puffin.

Fratercula Arctica. Stephens.
Guillemot nain. Temm.

Sea Parrot. Colliaheen.

The curious little puffin exhibits one of the most extraordinary appearances of any of the birds in the family, as the bill is enormously developed for the size of the bird. Although it is a common species, the puffin offers no proportion to the immense numbers of the razor-bills or guillemots in whose company it is found. Breeding, like them, in communities, it differs in the situation selected to nidify, as it chooses the deserted burrow of a rabbit, or a hole excavated by the bird, at the bottom of which their young are successfully hatched. When holes in the earth are not obtainable, the puffin occasionally selects clefts and fissures in the face of the precipice, at the entrance of which they are often observed standing. Displaying more activity on the wing and in the water than the other birds of the family, the puffin offers many inducements to observe its habits. Immediately on its arrival in spring the breeding haunts are occupied, from which, like the razor-bill, it seldom is found at a distance. Frequenting principally the northern side of Lambay Island, on one occasion, when a single bird was fired at, five or six issued from different clefts and sought the protection of the sea. In similar situations on the west coast they occur in numbers, where they are known by the familiar appellation of "colliaheen," or old woman, from their singularly old-fashioned appearance.

In those localities the young birds are described to be much persecuted by the scald crow (*Corvus cornix*), who watch from above and carry them off during the parent's absence.*

Best known on the eastern coast by the name of "sea parrot," they were at one time the subject of a clever hoax upon some of the sober citizens of Dublin, who were desirous to obtain a tropical luxury at an unusually cheap rate. Some two or three dozen sea parrots having been captured, were exposed for sale at Carlisle Bridge, under the attractive appellation of East Indian parrots, and where they were readily disposed of at an average of from two to five shillings each, the purchasers receiving a gratuitous caution to be careful in handling them, as they were inclined to bite, an accomplishment with which the puffin is "au fait." It is needless to remark, a diet of bread and water but ill agreed with the poor puffins, and all perished from hunger.

Habitat—Southern Europe.

FAMILY XXXIX.—PELICANIDÆ (PELICANS).

Genus CVIII.—Phalacracorax (Cormorant).

Species 226.—The Common Cormorant.

Phalacracorax carbo. Jard.
Cormoran grand. Temm.

This common bird is resident on our coasts, and frequently to be met with in our bays and estuaries, generally attracting notice from its large size and dark colour.

In some localities it is seen in considerable numbers, and even in our own bay can be observed during all seasons. As may be supposed from the form of the feet, and their distance behind, the cormorant is an excellent swimmer, and dives with great rapidity. Its food consists of small fishes, flounders, eels, and herrings. Indeed the cormorant is not particularly discriminating in its choice, and when fishing, wisely adheres to the adage, "first come first served."

When swimming, the cormorant is easily distinguished from all aquatic birds by its long, upright neck, and a great portion of the body immersed, which, when alarmed, is sunk in the water so as to leave little more than the head visible.

* Mr. T. W. Hopkins.

The flight of this species is very rapid, and is performed with quickly repeated beats of the comparatively small wings, flying at a short distance from the water's edge, but performed at a great height when over land.

A favourite locality of this bird is the oyster-bed situated on the north side of the Pigeon House Fort, where several may be remarked feeding in close proximity, and in active pursuit of their prey. Preparatory to diving, the body is raised nearly erect, sometimes entirely out of the water, and the plunge is performed with great velocity, and after a short time comes to the surface. The size of the fish swallowed by this bird is often almost incredible, which may be explained by the great dilatability of the œsophagus, and the bill opening a considerable distance beyond the eye.

The cormorant thrives well in confinement if supplied with an abundance of food; but as it possesses a peculiarity in not knowing when it is satisfied, the expense attending it would amount to a considerable sum. From an article published by Mr. Glennon in the Dublin Penny Journal, and which has since been copied into several ornithological works, we are indebted for the present anecdote respecting those birds in captivity:—

"Several years ago I took a pair of these birds from a nest amongst the rocks of Howth, and kept them for nearly two years, by which time they had attained their full growth. They were pleasant pets enough, unless when pressed by hunger, when they became outrageous and screamed most violently; when satisfied with food, they slept, roosting on a large stone trough placed for holding water. But woe to the man or beast attempting to approach them when hungry. It happened once that a gentleman's servant went to look at them while in this state: he wore a pair of red plush breeches that immediately attracted the attention of the birds, which I had been in the habit of feeding with livers and lights; the consequence was, they made such a furious attack that I had to run to his assistance with a stick, and could not beat them off without the greatest difficulty. Their attack on dogs, cats, and poultry, if unprotected, was always fatal. They fought at once with their bills, wings, and claws, screaming frightfully all the time. In fact, the cause of my parting with them was their having destroyed a fine Spanish pointer; he had incautiously strayed into the place where I kept them, and they immediately flew at and attacked him in front and rear; his loud howling brought me to his aid, when I was astonished to find they had got him down, and before I could

rescue him from their fury they had greatly injured him in one of his shoulders, so much so that he afterwards died of the wound."

The cry of the cormorant is harsh and croaking, and is but seldom uttered. These birds generally breed in flocks, on inaccessible ledges of rock or unfrequented islands, and the nest is formed of a few sticks, loosely lined with coarse grass and marine plants. The eggs are very small for the size of the bird, elongated, and thickly encrusted with a white calcareous substance, which can be removed by scraping, when the under pale green colour is exposed. When a frequented breeding locality is approached, the odour emanating from it is far from agreeable; so that we think the Mosaic law respecting this bird was in little fear of being transgressed, as even the Greenlanders are unwilling to touch it.

The cormorant is most difficult to approach; and, differing from the Anatidæ, does not dive, but rises silently from the water and flies off. Laying the fresh water under contributions, it frequently ascends rivers in search of fish, perching on the trees, and becoming a destructive visitor to fish preserves.

One end of the small island opposite Clontarf is constantly frequented by a number of these birds, which sometimes exhibit a curious appearance, when many stand ranged in a line, with wings expanded as if to dry their feathers :

> "The cormorant stands upon its shoals,
> His black and dripping wings
> Half open to the wind."

During the high tide they occupy some stakes in the locality, and patiently wait the decrease of the waters to search the first portion of the strand exposed.

Figuratively used in the Old Testament as an emblem of desolation, Zephaniah, denouncing Nineveh, prophesied it to be in time the resort of the bittern and cormorant, from which time it has retained its ill repute to the present. The Druids, too, believed it to have been ill-omened in its appearance:

> "Slowly the cormorant aims his heavy flight,
> Portending ruin to each baleful rite."

In the beautiful imagery of Milton, he depicts the archfiend

> "On the tree of life,
> The middle tree, the highest there that grew,
> Sat like a cormorant."

In China this bird is domesticated for the purpose of catching fish, a small ring being fastened round the neck to prevent self-appropriation. In England it has also been tamed with similar success; and in the present day we have frequently observed in the newspapers accounts of their tractability.

Indigenous.

Species 227.—The Green Cormorant.

Phalacracorax cristatus. Selby.
Cormoran longup. Temm.

Shag. Crested Cormorant.

This species, alike elegant in form and plumage, occurs in a very small proportion to the preceding, and seldom ventures into bays and estuaries, but affects more maritime habits, and is often found during summer and winter a considerable distance from the land.

Similar in its habits to the preceding, we observe them at Lambay flying backwards and forwards between their breeding haunts, in small parties of from five to a dozen.

Graceful and beautiful in its appearance, the ornithologist is at all times gratified by its observance, and it never occurs to more advantage than when eight or ten birds congregate on some rock, to preen their feathers, their burnished plumage glancing brightly whilst attempting to free themselves from the parasites which infest them. Of similar interest in its breeding haunts, their nests are situated along the upper ledges in some cave by the sea-side; and on entering our appearance is greeted by some dozen long, snake-like necks poked downwards, whilst on the least alarm all the birds shoot down into the water, and dive from the cave.

Watchful and difficult to approach, occasionally they exhibit considerable tameness where they have become habituated to a locality. Thus we have many times observed them to the best advantage when perching upon the safety buoys in Dublin Bay, where they remain, without the slightest alarm, within a short distance of the steam-vessels constantly passing.

Possessing the same disagreeable odour and toughness of flesh which distinguishes the more common species, we were considerably amused by observing five crested cormorants exposed for sale by a fisherman at Dieppe, his importunity towards the English passengers becoming so excessive as to

require the interference of the douaniers; the most amusing thing was the modest valuation of five francs, which was the price asked for them.

Indigenous.

Genus CIX.—Sula (Gannet).

Species 228.—The Gannet.

Sula Bassana. Brisson.
Fou blanc ou de bassan. Temm.

Solan Goose.

The Gannet is a species of large size, and rendered attractive by its white plumage. Its appearance upon the coast is always hailed with pleasure and delight both by the fisherman and the ornithologist,—to one bringing an opportunity to study its habits, and to the other an assurance of plenty which invariably accompanies its appearance. Rarely appearing upon the Dublin coast, it is but seldom observed, and those instances occurring to our notice were principally upon the coast line between Malahide and Drogheda. Similar in habits to the Sternidæ, like them it breeds in company, and adopts the same method of obtaining food, so that the gannet might be almost characterized as a tern of immense size.

Found breeding in a single locality upon the Irish coasts, the number of those large birds frequenting the Skellig Rocks during summer must be a grand sight for the ornithologist. Careless in the structure of a nest, a few dried stalks of fuci are rudely placed together, on which the single egg is placed and the young hatched. The flight of the gannet is performed with bold, rapid sweeps of the wing, at a considerable altitude from the water; and when about to fish it takes several large, semicircular sweeps, the wings apparently motionless and having perceived a fish, even at an immense height above, it poises itself for an instant with a backward motion, and instantly the white body glances through the air and enters the water with such immense force, that the spray, white as the bird which has disappeared, shoots up to a considerable distance: after an interval it emerges, and is in most cases successful in its aquatic foray: some idea of which may be formed from the fact, noticed by Buchanan in his View of the Fishery of Great Britain, that one hundred and five millions of herrings are destroyed annually by the gannets of St. Kilda. Interesting as is the fishing of a single bird to the observer,

the appearance of a flock all busily engaged must be a pleasing spectacle, as a correspondent writing from Cork (who had visited the Skelligs, and from whom we received eight of the eggs) described, having observed nearly forty or fifty gannets employed fishing within some distance of the island, the sea presenting a curious appearance from the constant spirting up of the foam occasioned by their immersion into it; the fish lying very low, the gannets necessarily had to strike from an increased altitude. Only on one occasion, when boating off the islands of Skerries on the Dublin coast, we had the pleasure of making a close examination of a gannet, a magnificent-looking specimen. Possibly attracted by the mackerel which the boatmen were "striking" in great numbers, it swept over the boat so steadily upon the wing, that it appeared as if pushed forward by some unseen power, and so close, that the downward glance of the eye was plainly discerned. A mackerel flung out by the boatmen attracted no attention.

Gannets are often obtained about the Scotch islets by floating a herring fastened to a board, at which the gannet stoops with such force in its downward descent, that the neck is dislocated. Possessing the greatest sharpness of sight, we are informed by Martin that its other name of solan is derived from an Irish word signifying quickness of sight.

Habitat—Europe.

FAMILY XL.—STERNIDÆ (TERNS).

Genus CX.—Sterna (Tern).

Species 229.—Ruppell's Tern.

Sterna velox. Rupp.
Hirondelle de mer veloce. Temm.

This fine species, reminding us by its large size of some of the smaller gulls, is the rarest of the Sternidæ in its occurrence in Great Britain, never having been obtained in England or Scotland, and extremely limited in its European distribution. On the authority of L. Bonaparte, Prince of Canino, when commenting upon Mr. Thompson's paper, relative to the present occurrence of this species, before the Ipswich Meeting of the British Association, it is mentioned as a bird of the

eastern Mediterranean; and, as far as he was informed, not found westward of Sicily.*

Shot at the end of December, 1846, in the vicinity of a fresh-water pond between Kilbarrack and Sutton, by Mr. J. Lynch, of Dublin, we have been favoured by that gentleman with the following particulars respecting it. Observed flying in company with several of the black-headed gulls, when one of the latter was shot, it made a descent in the air after it, when it was also shot with the contents of the second barrel. Not having any idea of its rarity, no attention was paid to its habits, except to remark its similar appearance to the gulls with which it was associated, and by the merest chance it was not thrown away, but thrust, with the other birds, into the pocket of a shooting-coat.

When partially skinned, we extracted the tongue and part of the skull. The specimen, when preserved, was left at Dr. Ball's residence for sale by the taxidermist; but that gentleman being on a visit with Mr. Thompson, of Belfast, it was purchased for our own collection.

Rare in collections, a specimen in similar plumage is preserved in the British Museum, and labelled from the Red Sea; but, on attentive examination of the Sternidæ in the admirable zoological collection at the Jardin des Plants, no specimen was preserved, nor, on inquiry, was it known to the Curator. Not admitted to the European Fauna by the latest continental authors, we know nothing of its habits in the countries frequented by it, and of whom Charles Bonaparte has alone given its habitat:—"On dit que l'hirondelle de mer véloce (*Sterna velox*, Ruppell) espêce commun aux Indes et dans une grande partie de l'Afrique fréquente egalment les parties chaudes de l'Europe méridionale."†

Habitat—Northern Africa.

Species 230.—The Sandwich Tern.

Sterna Cantiaca. Jardine.
Hirondelle de mer caugek. Temm.
Big Skirr.

The Sandwich Tern is another fine species, although admitting no comparison with the great size of the preceding. More unusual in its occurrence than of actual rarity, it has never been met with beyond the eastern limits of the island.

* Thompson. † Schlegel, Revue Critique des Oiseaux d'Europe.

Having had many opportunities of observing these birds, it is a species which has gratified us extremely by its interesting habits. Possessing a bold, rapid flight, in most instances it attracts attention by its loud, grating cry, incessantly uttered, and resembling the words, "gareek," "greek." Watchful and difficult to approach, we could never succeed in obtaining a chance shot at them when on the level strand of Portmarnock and Baldoyle; at which places, observing them during the summer and autumn of various years, we were induced to visit the principal breeding place of the terns upon the east coast, situated at the Cow and Calf rocks, two small islets of granitic formation lying to the north of Lambay. On describing them to the boatmen, we were agreeably surprised to find them well known as "big skirrs," to distinguish them from the smaller and common species. On approaching the rock three detached flocks, composed of the common roseate and Arctic terns, flew from it, so beautiful and spotless in appearance as to suggest the notion of so many silvery clouds, whilst the kittiwakes in a large body wheeled backwards and forwards across the rock; with the exception of a single sandwich tern, none remained perching on the rock. Scarcely had it flown off, and uttered its harsh scream, when it was joined by two others, who continued flying in circles at an immense altitude over head during the time we remained. Their flight was exceedingly beautiful, outrivalling even that of the buoyant roseate by its sudden and rapid turns, the appearance of the different species reminding us of the swallows and martins flying low whilst the swift is screaming at a great height, so the three common species showed little timidity, whilst the large sandwich species kept at a distance screaming loudly. We obtained one broken egg of the sandwich tern, agreeing in size and marking with Continental specimens in our collection. On our observing to the boatmen their small numbers, they remarked that the large skirrs flew daily inland to feed upon fresh-water fishes in the small streams, returning to the rock at night.

Habitat—Eastern Europe.

Species 231.—The Arctic Tern.

Sterna Arctica. Linn.
Hirondelle de mer arctique. Temm.
Skirr. Jourougs.

This species, more unusual in its occurrence than the common or roseate terns, appears to be of considerable rarity on

the coast range from Wicklow to Balbriggan, and at their breeding place upon the Rock a Bill, one not being obtained for every fifty of the common tern; even the eggs obtained upon the day of our visit admitting a similar conclusion, only three of their eggs to thirteen of the common, and seven of the roseate terns.

In some localities, more common around the island than the other species, their non-occurrence about the Dublin coasts is curious, as they are extensively distributed on the northern, southern, and western shores, and appear in considerable flocks. On the authority of W. J. Patten, Esq., they are familiarly known on the west coast as "jourougs," signifying a cross, peevish disposition; so named from their habit of picking and biting themselves when wounded and thrown on the bottom of the boat. More commonly known about the coast by the name of "skirrs," from the resemblance to the grating cry they utter, they are as often denominated sea swallows, from their likeness to their land namesake, and being only a summer visitant to our shores.

The flight of the birds of this family is remarkably light and buoyant, and at times is performed with great velocity; but, when searching for food, they advance with regular and rather slow strokes of the wing, and the instant a sand-eel or fish is observed below, the tern descends in a rapid and headlong plunge, passing through the air like a flash of light, and seizing, with unerring accuracy, the desired object with the bill.

The flesh of the tern is singularly delicate, and we can scarcely express wonder at its mention in the household books of the olden time, even enjoying the honour of appearing at the "mees" of royalty; by which records we are also informed of the value attached to it of fourpence per dozen.

Habitat—Eastern Europe.

Species 232.—The Common Tern.

Sterna hirundo. Linn.
Hirondelle de mer pierre Garin. Temm.
Skirr.

Bearing a close resemblance to the Arctic, the common tern is the most abundant of the Sternidæ upon our shores, and is of considerable interest from the fact of its indifferently frequenting fresh-water lakes, or rocky islets in the sea for the purposes of nidification. To our notice it has occurred in considerable numbers on various parts of the coast. Similar in the harbour of Cork as in Killiney Bay, during the same

week in August, large flocks, consisting of some hundreds, were observed on different days; and in the same abundance in Dublin Bay, on the authority of Joshua Lamprey, Esq., who procured, at our request, many immature specimens, and notes descriptive of their habits. That gentleman remarked their habit of fishing more constantly when the sun was shining upon the water than at any other time, so much so that when, uncertain of their locality, he directed the boatmen to row in that direction where the sun appeared brightest, and where, if the birds were in the bay, he was certain to obtain as many as he wished. In one instance twenty-eight birds were obtained out of thirty shots, and nothing but a desire to procure rare specimens could have tempted him to deal such havoc amongst the unoffending flock.

To the observation of Mr. Irwin, of Roscommon, this tern breeds in limited numbers upon small reedy islets in the lakes of that county, and where he has obtained the eggs, respecting which he has informed us of the following circumstance: "During the season of scarcity and famine in Ireland, those breeding haunts were regularly searched by the peasants in the neighbourhood to obtain eggs, and often with such success that he has observed an apron filled with those of the common tern, black-headed gull, water-hen, and bald-coot."

Other breeding places selected by this species are unfrequented extents of strand, where the eggs are deposited in some natural depression of the sand amongst gravel, or in the low bent grass on the shore. Often the casual observer is taken by surprise at beholding the seemingly unprotected eggs, and is pleased at their having escaped his footsteps. He is yet more surprised at the absence of the birds from the vicinity of the nest, and proceeds to appropriate the seemingly neglected prize, when he is startled by the harsh and grating screams of the parent birds, who by this time have arrived in eager haste from their feeding station, generally some short distance from land, and within sight of their nest. With graceful flight they dart with velocity past the intruder, abruptly turn, glide, and hover on tremulous wings, their full, black, humid eyes speaking an agony of apprehension, their tiny red feet shivering convulsively, and their piteous screams bewailing the prospect of losing the fond objects of their future cares.

On one of those calm summer days,—

"The bridal of the earth and sky,"

it is a lovely sight to observe, by some sequestered shore, a number of these joyous wanderers, arrived from other seas and brighter skies, congregated as in a silvery cloud, their pleasure evinced in loud and incessant clamoring, whilst each instant white forms glance downward, and are lost to view for a second under the glittering waters of the bay. Some leave the flock, and with attention search along by the surfy line of the advancing tide, their vociferous and clamorous cries chiming in unison with the loud roar of the snow-white breakers.

Regarded with pleasurable sensations as are the terns by the fishermen and dwellers upon the coast, as being the harbingers of a good and prosperous fishing season, it is gratifying to find their appearance similarly appreciated centuries since by the sagas of the Norse Vikings.*

> "Now let the steed of Ocean bound
> O'er the North Sea, with dashing sound;
> Let nimble tern, and screaming gull,
> Fly round and round, our net is full."

Habitat—Eastern Europe.

Species 233.—The Roseate Tern.

Sterna Dougallii. Mont.
Hirondelle de mer Dougall. Temm.
Skirr.

This beautiful species is extremely local in its distribution, and is seldom found exceeding the range of the eastern coasts of Ireland. The most attractive of the terns, equally for the chaste simplicity of its plumage, as the elegant and exquisite proportions which so much distinguish it from all others, none of the birds in this family, beautiful as are all, both in their interesting habits and the similarity of their plumage, can at all equal the present species. Indeed, whilst regarding this bird, we can well enter into the enthusiasm of the naturalist who bestowed the appellation of Paradisea† upon it; so beautiful, that we involuntarily recall that region where birds of a like species were fabled, from their roseate-tinted plumage, to have been harnessed to the sun, and from the brightness of whose beams they alone obtained the peculiar tint which overspread their plumage. Discernible at once from the elegance of its frail form, we require no history of its ha-

* Laing's Sea Kings. † Brunnick.

bits to inform us of its inability to abide the rough blasts of autumn and winter, but that, like our summer migratants on the land, its appearance is limited to the time when the islets and surrounding seas are prepared for its reception. To the fisherman its grating cry is as welcome as the craking of the land-rail to the farmer, and its buoyant form is hailed with the same gratification upon the sea as the swallow upon the land.

To most ornithologists few birds have conferred more pleasure in observing their habits than the roseate tern. Congregated in small flocks, they form in a manner similar to the gulls "a play" upon the water, wherever a "school" of fish is swimming near the surface, each bird, attractive from its changing and varying appearance,—

> "Now poising o'er ocean thy delicate form,
> Now breasting the surge with thy bosom so warm;
> Now sweeping the billow, now floating on high,
> Now bathing thy plumes in the light of the sky."

Yet beautiful as are those birds, they are too often ruthlessly condemned to suffer for those very attractions which should preserve them,—instances frequently occurring where a breeding haunt is invaded by persons whose propensities for slaughter find an outlet in the destruction of these unoffending birds. Equally unfortunate in its habits at this time, the roseate tern forgets its usual timidity; and when a bird after being shot falls slowly through the air from its buoyant lightness, the entire flock congregate and fly down towards it as if wondering why it had left their joyous troop. Flying in its vicinity, they scream notes of compassion, which are changed into a requiem for themselves, for the class who commit such an atrocity consider each pitiable trait exhibited by the bird as at least a tribute to the skill which they evince in destroying them. Thus an intelligent boatman of Skerries (Hynes), whom we had engaged when sailing to various islets to observe these birds, described, on one occasion, seeing the water almost white with their plumage, strewed round the boat which two persons, representing themselves as doctors from the city, had hired for the occasion, so many being destroyed that the boatman begged them not to kill all, but to leave a few birds to breed. The effects of these barbarities were easily observed when we visited the islet in 1850, when there were not more than seventy or eighty roseate terns about it, where they had been

remarked by the Rev. George Robinson congregated in hundreds six years previous.

Seven of the eggs of this species which we obtained were deposited in small cavities beneath blocks of stone; no young birds of any species being observed, from the constant "razzias" of the eggs.

Connected with an oriental myth, we may select the roseate tern to be the subject which represents the amber found in the sea to be the tears wept by the sea-bird in sorrow for the bereavement of its young:

> "Around thee shall glisten the loveliest amber
> That ever the sorrowing sea-bird hath wept."

Habitat—Eastern Europe.

Species 234.—The Whiskered Tern.

Sterna leucopareia. Natterer.
Hirondelle de mer moustac. Temm.

This tern is one of great rarity in Ireland, only a single specimen having been obtained, whilst in England two instances are recorded. The present specimen was shot by Mr. John Hill whilst boating in the Bay of Dublin, and was in company with a flock of common terns when obtained. By that gentleman it was presented to Mr. Warren, in whose collection it is preserved.

Of considerable rarity in its European distribution, the dealers in Paris expose for sale quantities of their eggs, as also those of the white-winged black tern, which they remark to have been obtained from breeding haunts in the south of France.

Habitat—Eastern Europe.

Species 235.—The Black Tern.

Sterna nigra. Linn.
Hirondelle de mer epouvantail. Temm.

The Black Tern is the rarest of the more common species in its distribution, and occurs only in an occasional instance with us.

Of extreme rarity in its adult black plumage, two specimens were obtained; one by Dr. Chute, who saw it flying over a small lake in the county of Kerry, and another procured in the same county, and in similar plumage, in our own possession.

More common in its immature plumage, five specimens also in our collection were obtained, during different seasons, in the county of Dublin. Of these the last two came under notice in a living state, in October, 1852, when we remarked two birds flying in the bay, which attracted attention from their small appearance, and long sweep of the wing in flight. Believing them to be the immature little gull, or the black tern, we pointed them out to the intelligent caretaker of the University Rowing Club, with a wish that he would obtain both birds if possible. On the next morning he waited on us with two immature black terns, both killed with one shot. The bill of one exhibited a curious malformation, the points of both mandibles being crossed in a similar manner to the crossbill.

Their flight was very beautiful and buoyant, and their way of feeding peculiar: flying above the smooth water in the wake of a dredge-vessel, they returned backwards and forwards over the same place whilst we remained; never entering the water, they seemed to skim it closely in the manner of the black-headed gull, a fact likewise remarked by Dr. C. Farren in a paper read before the members of the Dublin Natural History Society, when a specimen in immature plumage, obtained by that gentleman at Clonea, county of Waterford, was exhibited to the meeting.

In no instance found nidifying in Ireland, Sir W. Jardine, in his work on British Birds, has unintentionally committed an error when remarking: "In Ireland the black tern breeds at a small lake at Roxburgh, near Middleton, Cork;" a situation where, although observed during July, in different seasons, by R. Ball, Esq., no instance of its breeding came under his notice.

More common in France during summer, it is described as breeding in marshy situations, the nest at times being placed upon the large leaves of nénuphar (*Nymphœa lutea*), and floating upon the water.*

Habitat—Eastern Europe.

* Ornithologie Européenne.

Species 236.—The White-winged Black Tern.

Sterna leucoptera. Meissner.
Hirondelle de mer leucoptére. Temm.

This remarkable-looking bird, as rare as it is singular in the appearance of its plumage, has been twice obtained in Ireland (in no case having occurred in England). Of these specimens, the first was obtained by the same gentleman* who was so fortunate in shooting the rare-whiskered tern, and the broad-billed sandpiper, both species respectively their first occurrence in Ireland. It was shot near Ringsend, on the south side of the Liffey. Another specimen came into our possession, with the collection of the late William Massey, Esq., of the Pigeon House Fort; and was obtained by that gentleman in Dublin Bay.

Habitat—Northern Africa.

Species 237.—The Lesser Tern.

Sterna minuta. Linn.
Hirondelle de mer petite. Temm.
Skirr. Fairybird.

The smallest of the Sternidæ, the lesser tern yields to none of the preceding in the grace of its movements, or the neatness of its plumage. Differing from the other species in its numbers, and choice of breeding place, it is seldom found nidifying on rocky islets like them, but occupies, for that purpose, some unfrequented sandbank by the shore.

One of the earliest of the terns in arriving upon our shores, and in one instance so early that, on the 26th April, 1850, nearly thirty of these terns were observed actively engaged fishing in the vicinity of Greystones, county of Wicklow, a locality much frequented during summer. From inquiries instituted at the time, a few pairs annually nidify along the shingly range of the beach, in places where some few years previously thirty or forty pair existed. In a similar manner upon the Dublin coast, Dr. Hans Lloyd, of Malahide, has directed our attention to localities whence he had received eggs of the common and lesser terns, the nests being placed in the midst of the bent grass in the hollows of the sandbanks extending from Malahide to Portrane. To our observation, for a period extending over five years, this locality has not been tenanted by a single pair.

Breeding in limited numbers upon the western coast, on

* Mr. John Hill.

one occasion we received their eggs from Galway, where, on the authority of our informant,* they were well known in the neighbourhood by the appropriate appellation of "fairy-birds," received from the fishermen of the locality.

Singularly buoyant in flight, and active in its motions when engaged in fishing, the little tern is also as pugnacious in habits, as on two occasions we have remarked two birds of this species give chase to an intruding window martin which had the presumption to skim in the vicinity of their feeding station; and on another occasion, when a gray wagtail had occupied a large stone upon the beach "wagging" and calling while making the circuit of its surface, three lesser terns flying from the sea to occupy their favourite resting-place at once dashed towards the wagtail, and pursued it nearly a hundred yards along the side of a rivulet entering the sea, chattering the entire time similarly to sparrows. The undulating flight of the wagtail, and the quick, buoyant wing-sweeps of the pursuing terns, were highly amusing. On the wagtail perching, the chase terminated, as the three birds turned slowly and glided silently and sedately to the sea, apparently as if their dignity was insulted by being led away to pursue a mere land-bird.

Habitat—Southern Europe.

Species 238.—The Noddy.

Sterna stolida. Linn.
Hirondelle de mer noddy. Temm.

This tern is of great rarity in occurrence, and similar to the white-winged black tern, has been twice obtained: both specimens were shot between the Tuscar Lighthouse, off the coast of Wexford, and Dublin Bay, and came into the possession of William Massey, Esq., of the Pigeon House, by whom one was presented to Mr. Warren of Dublin.

Common in North America, a few specimens have been procured upon the French coast,† which, with the present birds obtained in Ireland, are the only recorded instances of its occurrence in Europe.

We should have said instances noted by the ornithologist, as Byron had recorded,‡ ten years before, the bodily appearance of "two boobys and a noddy," in seas where to the present day their occurrence is unknown.

Habitat—North America.

* T. Williams, Esq. † Temminck, Manuel de Ornithologie.
‡ Don Juan.

FAMILY XLI.—LARIDÆ (GULLS).

Genus CXI.—Larus (Gull).

Species 239.—Sabine's Gull.

Larus Sabini. Sabine.
Mouette de Sabine. Temm.

This elegant gull, reminding us of the beautiful forms we have seen comprised in the preceding family, is one of great rarity of occurrence in the British isles.

More rare in its occurrence in Britain, but two specimens have been noticed,* whilst in our own island four of the *Larus Sabinii* have been obtained: of these, three were shot in the north of Ireland, and a single specimen in the Bay of Dublin.

Of great beauty in its summer plumage, it has not been noticed in that stage in southern or temperate Europe; the preceding birds, obtained in the autumn of different years, being the first noticed either in that plumage or in their occurrence in Europe, by the late William Thompson of Belfast.

An inhabitant for the most part of the Arctic regions, it was first met with and killed by Captain Sabine, R. A., on islands off the west of Greenland.†

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Species 240.—The Little Gull.

Larus minutus. Pallas.
Mouette pygmée. Temm.

The Little Gull, the smallest of the Laridæ, is one of the most attractive of the family, and is of great rarity in its occurrence. Elegantly marked, its pretensions to beauty, when newly killed in the plumage of summer, are very great indeed,—the peculiar clear white plumage of the abdomen characterizing almost all the gulls being in this instance overspread with a roseate tint, similar in appearance to that which has obtained a name for the roseate tern.

Shot in three or four instances, its first occurrence was recorded in 1840, from a specimen shot by an officer on the

* Jardine. † Thompson.

river Shannon, who presented it to the Museum of the Dublin Natural History Society. Since that time the others have come under Mr. Thompson's notice in the north of Ireland.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Species 241.—The Black-headed Gull.

Larus ridibundus. Linn.
Mouette rieuse ou à capuchin brun. Temm.
Redshank Gull. Red-legged Gull.

Abundant and plentiful on our shores during autumn and winter, the black-headed gull is found tenanting in equal numbers the islets of the inland lakes during the season of incubation.

More familiar and unsuspicious in its habits than the majority of the more common Laridæ, the black-headed gull has many admirers. Beautiful in its nuptial dress whilst frequenting the picturesque vicinity of the places chosen for nidification, its vociferous calling imparts an additional interest to the otherwise quiet stillness of the lakes. At times displaying habits of an almost semi-domesticated nature, it congregates in troops, and mingles with or precedes the rooks, those watchful attendants upon the exertions of the ploughman, and occasionally in such vicinity to its dreaded enemy, man, that the ploughman's whip might easily encircle its form; but yet allow for once the confidence it reposes to be broken, and it displays that admirable power of instinct which alone preserves so many species from extinction. Thus in one instance, where forty or fifty of those birds were attendant upon the progress of the plough, the flock was fired at, and three birds killed, from the cover of a hedgerow they had unsuspectingly approached. After the discharge the others flew to the centre of the field, and when the ploughman, from whom they had experienced no cause for fear, passed close by, they flew over and followed him till within gun-shot of the hedgerow at each extremity of the field, when they instantly wheeled back and returned to their place of security whence no approach could be obtained without being observed.

Exhibiting those habits of famarility in localities where it receives no annoyance, it evinces the same qualities in approaching the vicinity of the city.

Having adorned the retired solitudes of the interior during summer, they take their departure on the approach of winter, and occupy the sea-shore in flocks, venturing up to the

source of rivers and streams, and displaying their beautiful evolutions upon the wing.

Certain that the protection extended towards them in the country will not be abused in the city, we observe them, during seven months of the year, in various numbers along the most busy and stirring portion of the quays of Dublin.

Attracting the attention of every class, on many occasions we have stood to admire their beautiful forms, between the quay range from Carlisle to Essex Bridge. Displaying every change of attitude, either the broad sweep of the wing in flight, the downward, gliding stoop, or poising over the water with feet half immersed, they continue to search for food, until, wearied of exertion, they drop buoyantly on the water, and allow themselves to float onward with its tidal motion. Unsuspecting of danger, they approach within a few feet of the wall, whence we can distinguish the plumage of all seasons, —the brown monk-like hood of spring, the black ear-patch of winter, and the attractive shades of brown peculiar to the young in their various stages.

Invested with interest from the fragments of bardic tradition which cling to it, this species was protected by the Druids, and was figuratively adopted as an emblem connected with the deluge, and formed an important feature in their ceremonies :—

> "Screams round the arch-druid's
> Brow the sea-mew, white
> As Menia's foam."

Not disagreeable in taste, the flesh of the redshank gull is eaten by most of the shooters who obtain it. During spring the eggs of this species occasionally appear in the markets of the city mixed up with those of the lapwing, to which they are not much inferior in delicacy of flavour.

That they were equally valued at a remote period we have the testimony of a passage from a "description of the income of the King of Uladh (Ulster), where the bard Benean mentions, amongst other stipends,"*—

> "Twenty eggs of goodly sea-gulls!"

And again, as late as 1512, we find "sea gulles" accounted a great delicacy, and admitted to the principal feasts of that day, and, more strange, even valued at the same price as the teal.

Indigenous.

* Leabhar na g-Ceart, The Book of Rights.

Species 242.—Bonaparte's Gull.

Larus Bonapartii. Swainson.
Mouette de Bonaparte. Temm.

This rare species, whose first and only European occurrence was recorded by the late William Thompson, Esq., from a specimen obtained near Belfast, in February, 1848, is one of great interest to the ornithologist, as it almost presents to us a connecting link between the Sternidæ (terns) and Xemæ (black-headed gulls). Found abundantly upon the shores of Northern and Arctic America,* it associates with flocks of terns, to which its cry has some similarity, and in such numbers, that in Chesapeake Bay seventeen were killed at one discharge of a double-barrelled gun by a son of Mr. Audubon.

Habitat—Northern America.

Species 243.—The Masked Gull.

Larus capistratus. Linn.
Moutte à masque brun. Temm.

This species, if it be distinct from the black-headed gull, presents such a close affinity that the most distinguished Continental ornithologists are doubtful of the propriety of admitting its specific distinctions.

Critically examined by Mr. Thompson, who brought forward specimens answering to the description of the masked gull, and others of the black-headed species, and described their different seasonal changes in a paper read before the Zoological Society of London,—we must at least infer from it, on account of the changes of plumage, and the difference of size being so variable, that, until further knowledge is obtained of a habitat for the species, and a sufficient number of specimens all agreeing in presenting similar dimensions, with other differences from varieties of the black-headed gull, we must remain in doubt respecting it.

Two of these birds came under our notice, one exposed for sale in Mr. Glennon's shop, and another shot inland at Dundrum. Mr. Thompson noticed four or five birds presenting a similar appearance, which have also occurred in the north of Ireland.

* Audubon.

Species 244.—The Great Black-backed Gull.

Larus marinus. Linn.
Mouette à manteau noir. Temm.

Goose Gull. Gray Gull. Parson Gull.

This bold, handsome species, the largest and most powerful of our Irish gulls, is found in suitable localities in the neighbourhood of the coast, and generally attracts attention by its loud, hoarse cackle, and great expanse of wing when flying.

The most common of the larger gulls about the bay and coasts of Dublin, it is observable during all seasons, but from its watchful habits rarely admits of approach within gun-shot.

Frequenting some localities in considerable numbers, the grand station upon the Dublin coast is on a small sandbank situated at the entrance of the estuary of Baldoyle, seldom an hour passing without receiving some addition to its numbers. Standing motionless, it never condescends the slightest notice to whatever flock may alight beside it, or even shows the least familiarity to its own species. Usually silent, it occasionally droops the wings, and, similar to the eagle, stretches out the neck, uttering a note not unlike the "kleeking" of that bird. When alarmed by any approach from the shore, it apparently pushes itself from the ground, and sails off in the most sedate manner.

Similar in its habits upon the western coast, Mr. W. H. Patten describes it as being most difficult of approach, so much so that during many years he could not succeed in obtaining even a chance shot. To the people in the vicinity it is known from the contrast of the black back with the snow white of the under plumage, as the "great parson gull."

To every frequenter of the coast the stately form of this handsome bird is well known, and, whether observed in summer, when quietly sunning itself on the strand, or in winter amid the conflicting roar of elements, steadying itself in the eddying blast, it cannot fail to win our admiration. At no time more attractive than when observed during hazy, foggy weather, a black-backed gull, looming through a cloud with its immense sweep of wing (often exceeding five feet), increased by the state of the atmosphere to a giant size, almost reminds us of the albatross.

Of nearly equal interest in its appearance upon the shore, it attracts similar attention. There! look at that big fellow! how stately he stands, rich in the perfection of marine majesty. Now moving forward to inspect that stranded gur-

nard, he walks slowly about, cautious and fearful of a design upon his gullship, and then, apparently satisfied, without hurry or unbecoming haste, he proceeds to dinner. He still continues feeding and watching until he thinks it time to be off. Now look at him, how steadily he moves along with almost motionless pinions, reminding us of the eagle by his bold and beautiful gyrations; at times sailing along with outspread pinions, he appears almost a fixed object against the clear blue sky; a few quick flaps, and round he goes again, until, annoyed at our intrusion on his udal territory, he bursts into a loud guttural laugh, followed by a hoarse, irritated cackle, and accompanied with a sudden swoop. A dull report—a flash—a hurried flutter, and he has fallen from his "pride of place" lifeless on the sandy beach.

It has appeared strange to us the origin of the nearly obsolete word "gull," synonymous with a fool or one easily duped, as, of all our Irish birds, there are few possessing such wariness as the family of gulls,—as oftentimes on a level strand we have observed them taking flight before the proverbially watchful heron could see the least cause of alarm.

Indeed, we might say Pythagoras himself became resuscitated in the form of one of those birds; as for sagacity, cunning, watchfulness, and actual dignity of manner, none can outvie the black-backed gull. His movements are conducted with especial grace. He walks sedately, flies sedately, and even when suddenly surprised, rises leisurely, and seldom utters a cry to indicate alarm.

The great black-backed gull obtains food by searching the rejectamenta of the tide, and in some localities ventures inland, attracted by carrion, of which it partakes greedily; nor does it scruple to attack one of its brethren when slightly wounded by the sportsman, and perhaps in a fair way of recovery, were it not for the equivocal attentions of these dubious Samaritans—so strangely illustrating the proverb of "safety from our friends."

Indigenous.

Species 245.—The Lesser Black-backed Gull.

Larus fuscus. Linn.
Mouette à pied jaunes. Temm.

Gray Gull.

This beautiful species, from its similarity to the preceding in form and marking, might almost pass for a small variety,

were it not for the rich yellow colour of the tarsi which in all seasons distinguish it.

Almost rare in its occurrence, it is but seldom captured upon our eastern shores; and on the west coast is a species of great rarity during all seasons.*

In Dublin Bay, during the severity of winter, a stray bird may appear for a few days; and, on the least clearing of the weather, as suddenly take its departure. Occasionally observed in small flocks, on two occasions they have occurred to our own notice: once when the station frequented by the great black-backed gull at Baldoyle was occupied by six of the present species; who, apparently careless of feeding, stood with the statue-like stiffness peculiar to the larger gulls. On another occasion in July, when the birds should have been occupying their breeding stations, fourteen appeared on the Wicklow coast, flying in a line similar to a "string" of wild ducks; and beautiful they appeared; the white stripe on the wing appearing most conspicuous in flight, and each motion made in perfect unison with the other. A curious similarity, both as regards the number and appearance, was likewise observed in the summer of 1851, when fourteen birds were remarked flying in a line on the sea-shore at Dieppe.

Noted by its describers as not particular in its choice of food, it is curious to observe a fastidious taste existing amongst birds of the same species, as in one locality the same bird eats greedily of a substance which it refuses in another. Thus we have remarked a delicacy of taste peculiar to the gulls upon the Dublin coasts, in their objecting to partake of carrion, or of any stranded animal.

On the Wicklow coast, near Killencarrick, we observed a dead sheep upon the shore, which was daily flocked to by ravens and hooded crows, yet not a single black-back or herring gull ever ventured to its vicinity.

On the coast at Malahide the officer in charge of the Martello Tower at Rob's Wall informed us that the gulls in his neighbourhood in all cases refuse dead animal matter. In one instance, where a dead horse was eaten by ravens and hooded crows, no sea-gulls were observed during the time it was lying.

On the west coast Mr. Glennon has observed both the black-backed gulls feeding upon carrion; as also Mr. Thompson in the north of Ireland; whilst we are informed by De-

* T. W. Patten, Esq.

gland, that in the south of Russia it is so voracious as to dispute with the dogs for the offal in the neighbourhood of abbatoirs.*

Species 246.—The Herring Gull.

Larus argentacus. Linn.
Mouette à manteau bleu. Temm.

The Herring, or, as it is commonly denominated, the silvery gull, is common in its distribution around the shores of Ireland, but in the Bay of Dublin and surrounding coasts the herring gull is uncommon in its appearance, nearly a dozen black-backed gulls being observable for every single herring gull, a fact of very considerable interest, as a contrary proportion exists in almost any other portion of the coast.

Beautiful in the spotless plumage of the summer, this bird has less of the peculiar heaviness of form that distinguishes the preceding birds, and, differing also in its habits, it assumes neither their dignity nor gravity, but socially mixes with the crowd that search the shallows for food.

Breeding in considerable numbers along the rock-bound side of the east of Lambay, they occasionally present to the ornithologist that grand sight,—a "play" of gulls upon the water. Beautiful in the extreme, we were once gratified by the observance of one of these attractive spectacles, where, perhaps, 300 or 400 birds were congregated feeding.

Returning from the Rock a Bill, the boatmen, to pass the time as profitably as possible, let out some mackerel lines, but finding no fish, a lugger passed us, and, flinging a mackerel on board for bait, directed us to row a-head; there was a a "school" of fish in "play." As we approached, from every side gulls were hastening in hurried flight towards the grand feeding station, where, screaming vociferously, or at times sailing in the air, and using their peculiar cry, every evolution that gull was capable of performing was going forward in the most intricate medley: now circling round, and with a sudden swallow-like sweep, they dipped their feet in the water:

"The sportive sea-gull dancing with the waves."

Then, sweeping upward in the air, they would flutter a few feet downwards, as if intoxicated at the scene of plenty displayed below. Almost careless of our approach, they ap-

* Ornithologie Européenne.

peared the feathered dervishes of the air, whose rapid and unwearied flight had brought a delirium of ecstacy upon them.

Some, at a distance from the flock, rested upon the water with that extraordinary buoyant appearance of the larger gulls, the tail being raised so high as almost to lead one to doubt as to the true position of the head.

Oftentimes during winter we observe one of these birds on the wing steadying himself after each blast of wind, poising a moment, and again shooting forward: we might say with the poet:—

> "White bird of the tempest—oh! beautiful thing—
> With the bosom of snow and the motionless wing;
> Now silently poised o'er the war of the main,
> Like the spirit of charity brooding o'er pain."

Indigenous.

Species 247.—The Glaucous Gull.

Larus glaucus. Briss.
Mouette burgermeister. Temm.

The Glaucous Gull can only be reckoned as an occasional visitant to our shores, and at different seasons, having been obtained both in summer and winter, and in adult and immature plumage.

Of great rarity in the full adult plumage, but two instances of its occurrence have been noticed: one in the Ordnance Museum, shot near Londonderry, and the other coming under observation from a specimen shot in the county of Galway during the famine year of 1846, and of which the following particulars were obtained, coinciding in correctness with Mr. Edmonston's remark,* "that, when allured by carrion it enters the bay, and boldly ventures inland." In the present instance a soup kitchen had been established within some distance of the coast, and each day the stately-looking fellow left its maritime domain, and sailed about the vicinity, where it had been attracted by the smell. Many of the peasants regarded it with an unfavourable eye, not being accustomed to observe a white bird of such dimensions floating in the air, and uttering its hoarse, cackling cries overhead as if laughing at their misery. It was shot soon after by a gentleman from Galway, who forwarded it to Mr. Glennon, who kindly presented it to us, but unfortunately too

* Jardine.

much injured for a cabinet specimen. A bird in immature plumage, shot in the winter of 1849, at the North Wall, Dublin Bay, is preserved in the collection of Mr. Robert J. Montgomery.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Species 248.—The Iceland Gull.

Larus Icelandicus. Edmonstone.
Mouette leucoptére. Temm.

This Gull, more rare than the glaucous, has only been obtained in some very few instances.

Resembling that bird in the distribution of its colour, it is at once distinguished by its smaller size, both birds forming a type similar to the black-backed gulls in their size and heavy appearance of form, and differing in the colour of the mantle, we might designate them as the great and lesser blue-backed gulls.

An inhabitant of remote Arctic regions, and in haunts where it is but rarely intruded upon by man, the specimens obtained in Ireland at once displayed their want of caution and familiarity in venturing closely into his presence. One, purchased by Mr. Thompson, was shot on the river Lagan, close to the town of Belfast, and was so tame, though in the full possession of its faculties, as to be within the reach of stones thrown by idle boys, and kept its ground, unless when struck by them, and even then it flew but a few yards and again alighted. A casual passer-by, perceiving that the bird would be an easy prey, went for a gun and shot it.*

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Species 249.—The Common Gull.

Larus canus. Linn.
Mouette à pieds bleu. Temm.

This common species, the most abundant of the true Laridæ, is as widely distributed as the black-headed gull, but occurs in more limited numbers. Observed at all seasons in the Bay of Dublin, it is wary of approach, and seldom ever ventures up the river unless forced by the severity of the weather.

Occasionally at such times we may observe amongst the gulls on the Liffey, between Carlisle and Essex Bridge, a few

* Thompson.

pair mixed with the black-headed gulls, and at rare intervals a herring gull may be seen floating buoyantly upon the water, but never feeding like the others.

Often observed during spring in flocks of hundreds, they present a very beautiful appearance; their white forms studding the field, and resembling at a distance the snowy tents of some fairy potentate; whilst at other times we observe the entire host wheeling about on the wing in endless evolutions:

> "The sea-mews from afar,
> Hovering above those inland solitudes,
> By the rough wind unscattered, at whose call
> Their voyage was begun."

Rare in its maritime breeding haunts, a few pair only nidify at Lambay, but more common in inland situations, like the black-headed gull, it selects islets in the lakes for that purpose. In the county of Roscommon Mr. J. Irwin has remarked their presence on the small lakes, also frequented by the terns for the same purpose. In the Book of Rights we find a curious notice, perhaps applicable to this or the black-headed species, where the king of Uladh (Ulster) is prohibited "to listen to the fluttering of the flocks of birds of Lock Sailleach [Swilly] after sunset." This prohibition has, in all probability, taken its origin from some king of Ulster having been killed in the vicinity about the time for the assembling of those birds.

A habit of this species, closely resembling the black-backed and herring gulls, is its stooping at any dog which may chance to intrude upon its territory, several instances of birds being shot by their want of caution in approaching those animals having occurred to our notice.

Indigenous.

Species 250.—The Ivory Gull.

Larus eburneus. Gmelin.
Mouette blanche ou sancteur. Temm.

This beautiful gull, so attractive from the spotless white plumage of the entire body, contrasted with the black colour of the feet, is one of great rarity, having only been obtained in a single instance, when a bird in immature plumage was shot in the county of Kerry, and came into the possession of Mr. R. Chute, of Blennerville. Obtained after a storm, when two others were observed in its company; two of the three birds alighted for several days in succession at Blennerville, and

were so familiar, that the servants* believed them to be tamed birds. One was reported to have been in the beautiful plumage of the adult. Several birds, answering to the description of this species, have been likewise observed in various parts of Ireland by persons whose ornithological knowledge was sufficient to verify their appearance.

In like manner with the glaucous and Iceland gulls, we must look to the Arctic regions for the true habitat of this bird, where it is described as being fearless in its habits, almost associating with the sailors when engaged in the operation of flensing the whale, on the flesh of which these gulls gorge themselves to excess.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Species 251.—The Kittiwake.

Larus rissa. Linn.
Mouette tridactyle. Temm.

The Kittiwake is, with the exception of the black-headed, the smallest of our common gulls, and during summer the most frequent visitor on our coast.

Observed in very limited numbers during winter, it appears more common upon the Dublin coast than in any other locality, as at that season it may be always observed in company with other gulls in the bay. Almost exclusively maritime in its habits, it never ventures inland like the other species, but contents itself with the sustenance it obtains upon the sea. During summer their breeding haunts present a most novel and beautiful appearance to the ornithologist.

Tenanting the precipices around the island in situations similar to the auk and guillemot, their immense numbers constitute the grand feature which attracts attention. Thousands of their unsullied forms, lining and banding the sides of the rock, resemble so many strata in appearance, whilst they charm the ear by their wildly modulated cries, as the eye by their numberless crowds, all forming a concert, which, although differing from

"The harvest of sweet lays"

that greets the ear inland, is still fraught with the most delightful associations. The hoarse guttural cackling of the great black-backed gulls coming down to us from an immense altitude; the loud laughing cries of the herring gulls, partly

* Thompson.

sounded from the sea, or from the air overhead, whilst, perhaps, ten thousand kittiwakes vociferate their chorus below, all harmonizing with such beautiful effect, that we yield insensibly to the magnificence of this primal orchestra of nature. As an instance of their former abundance at Lambay, we may quote a portion of our correspondence with the late William Thompson relative to their decrease.

About the year 1842 an officer, quartered in Dublin, laid a wager that he would shoot 500 birds here in a day, and, accordingly, went to the island provided with every requisite for his murderous purpose. Servants were constantly employed loading his guns and filling hampers with the slain, but long ere the sun had set his object was accomplished, and his bet won. Five hundred birds at this season, be it remembered, may be reckoned equivalent to twice or thrice that number, according to the species killed, and to the number they would respectively have produced.

An instance like this, which unfortunately is of too frequent occurrence, although of less magnitude in the numbers slaughtered, requires no comment. This species has been occasionally found dead inland, after high winds or storms, having perished from inability to brave the severity of the weather like our hardier species. Seldom found dead in any great numbers on our shores, they have been oftentimes obtained in numbers on the French coasts after a hard gale, as an instance of which we quote Degland, who informs us, on the authority of M. Baillon, of a storm which occurred in the month of September, 1824, where that gentleman found, in a small space on the shore near Abbeyville, more than 200 gannets, and 500 auks, sea-gulls, and petrels; whilst, most remarked, not a single duck was to be observed.*

Habitat—Eastern Europe.

Genus CXII.—Lestris (Skua).

Species 252.—The Great Skua.

Lestris catarrhactes. Linn.
Stercoraire càteracte. Temm.

Common Skua.

The place assigned by ornithologists to the skua in successive order after the gulls is correct, since when living it is constantly in pursuit of those birds. Distinguished by a dark

* Ornithologie Européenne.

form of colouring, and a rapid and powerful flight, they are admirably adapted for the mode of warfare by which they subsist. Compact in make, and armed with a powerful bill, they are at all times able to enforce their demand if resisted.

The present species, nearly equal in size to the lesser black-backed gull, is rarely obtained upon the coast, the first instance on record being the specimen shot by William Massey, Esq., of the Pigeon House Fort, and now in our collection. Another, which we observed in the collection of Dr. Farren, was found dead upon the Dublin coast by that gentleman.

They have occurred in two or three instances to Mr. Glennon, from specimens forwarded for preservation from the east and west coasts of Ireland, and one captured alive, of which the following particulars may not be devoid of interest.

A skua, with a slight injury on the wing-joint, was sent by the captain of a vessel lying in the bay, in charge of a sailor, to Mr. Glennon, with directions to kill and preserve it. The bird being confined in a large basket, Mr. Glennon, objected to kill the bird, desired the sailor to open it, which he no sooner did than the skua dashed vigorously and determinedly at him, striking with the bill and buffeting with the wings, drawing blood with every successful stroke it made, until at last the sailor drew out his clasp-knife in self-defence, but so well did the bird defend itself, that, had not a tablecloth been flung over it, the contest would have been of long duration. Such vigour and determination did this bird show, that we need not wonder how pertinaciously they are known to defend their breeding haunts when intruded upon.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Species 253.—The Pomarine Skua.

Lestris pomarinus. Temm.
Stercoraire pomarin. Temm.

This Skua, nearly equal in size to the preceding, and distinguished by the same dark shade of colouring, is a bird of more frequent occurrence, an occasional specimen being procured during winter. One, which came under our notice, was purchased in the Dublin markets, in the winter of 1846.

Another, shot in Belfast Bay,* appeared, from the contents of the stomach, to have been careless of whatever booty it could obtain, "a rat, fishbones, and feathers, being found in its stomach. Whilst a specimen, preserved by Mr. Glennon,

* Thompson.

had the remains of a sea-gull in the stomach, with a quantity of fishbones.

Of great beauty in the plumage of the adult, we see the feathers of the neck exhibiting a rich, glistening, yellow colour. This appears very conspicuous in a specimen in the possession of Dr. Robert Ball of this city, shot amongst a flock of sea-gulls in the Phœnix Park.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Species 254.—Richardson's Skua.

Lestris Richardsonii. Yarrell.
Stercoraire Richardson. Temm.

The rarest of the Lestridæ, Richardson's skua is seldom obtained, and, like the pomarine and Buffon's skua, chiefly in immature plumage. Closely resembling Buffon's skua, it is difficult to distinguish between them, as, on three occasions, we have noticed small skuas whilst on the wing; but in two of those instances were unable to determine their species from their distance from us, and their rapid flight.

In the autumn of 1847 a skua was observed by a friend for several days frequenting the entrance of the river Liffey, by whom it was remarked to us when we had the pleasure of observing its habits. Apparently upon the best terms with the black-headed and kittiwake gulls, it did not offer them the least annoyance, passing them many times with its swift and rapid flight. Whilst in view it flew down and rested for a considerable time upon the buoys placed in the river. Two days after, we saw the bird at Mr. Glennon's house, having been shot by a person in the neighbourhood, from whom we purchased it.

Since that time we remarked a skua profiting by the exertions of a flock of terns who were busily engaged fishing off the extremity of St. Patrick's Isle at Skerries. Dashing into the midst of them, it singled out one which had just emerged from the water, and which dropped at once the finny prey it had so unprofitably secured, when instantly it was caught by the skua before reaching the water. Several times the little fish would be observed silvering for a moment in the air before that black little pirate could seize and secure it.

Once, in the summer of 1852, a skua passed closely by us on the rocks at Lambay, and shot out seawards, continuing its rapid flight until it disappeared.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Species 255.—Buffon's Skua.

Lestris parasiticus. Jardine.
Stercoraire parasite ou labbe. Temm.

This elegant and graceful species, in the full plumage of the adult, is one of the most beautiful of its family, and, occurring in a greater proportion than any of the preceding, it has often passed under the observation of the ornithologist. All equally commissioned by nature for plunder, they are regarded with fear by their weaker brethren: a peaceful fleet of merchantmen could not see with greater dread the approach of some long, dark, piratical craft, than a flock of terns or gulls, when the dark wing of this feathered pirate glances through them and compels them to surrender their booty.

An immature bird in the author's collection, described some twenty-two years since in the Dublin Penny Journal as an unknown species, is only a variety, and was shot by Mr. Massey, of the Pigeon House, near the wall running out to sea. The remains of an adult bird, found inland after a storm, had also come under our notice.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Genus CXIII.—Procellaria (Fulmar).

Species 256.—The Fulmar.

Procellaria glacialis. Linn.
Petrel fulmar. Temm.

The Fulmar, which we might designate as a strong, compactly built gull, with the peculiar petrel-like form of the nostrils, is of extreme rarity in its occurrence in our Fauna, three specimens being recorded as having occurred.* One of these, which we had the pleasure of examining with Mr. Glennon in a recent state, had been shot at the North Strand, bordering upon Dublin Bay; it was in the adult plumage of the male, and is at present preserved in the collection of Mr. T. W. Warren of this city.

Frequenting and breeding in the islands of Arctic Europe, "it is well known to the whalers as a constant attendant on the stricken whale, feeding voraciously on the carcases after the flensing operations have terminated."†

Habitat—Northern Europe.

* Thompson. † Jardine.

Genus CXIV.—Puffinus (Shearwater).

Species 257.—The Cinereous Shearwater.

Puffinus cinereus. Selby.
Petrel cendre. Temm.

Hagdown.

The Cinereous Shearwater is a species of great rarity in its occurrence, the principal information being that contributed by Mr. Robert Davis, of Clonmel, to Mr. Thompson's work; and, from that gentleman having observed their habits in confinement, unnoticed by any previous observer, they are well worthy of our notice.* "The first specimen was taken in August, 1835, near Dungarvan, county of Waterford, and was sent to me alive. It was apparently in good health, but would not eat anything, and died, after being in my possession for about ten days or a fortnight. It had an extremely rank, fishy, or oily smell at all times, but I never saw any appearance of oil being discharged from its mouth or nostrils. It seemed unable to walk, but scrambled along with its breast about an inch from the ground. Although its wings were perfect and uninjured, it made no attempt to fly, but if let fall from a height dropped heavily to the ground. It showed an inclination to climb, having several times mounted up the handle of a long spade that rested against the wall of the yard in which it was kept. It did not ramble about, nor care for water, but when put in a large tub very dexterously pulled itself up by the hooked bill, until the claws got on the edge. When handled it bit severely."

From subsequent observations by that gentleman, it appears to be not uncommon upon the Waterford coast, the fishermen capturing them on a hook when employed in hake-fishing, and "keeping them for weeks about their houses; in some instances the birds have become tame. They never attempt to fly. I could not hear of this species having ever been shot, or otherwise taken than on a hook. It is commonly known by the name of hagdown."

Mr. S. Moss, of Youghal, has kindly informed us of the occasional occurrence of this shearwater, all being invariably captured upon the hook, by the fishermen employed in their avocations.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

* Thompson.

Species 258.—The Manx Shearwater.

Puffinus Anglorum. Jardine.
Petrel Manks. Temm.

Mackerel Cock.

This Shearwater, at one time occurring in greater abundance than at the present, is a rather uncommon species.

Widely distributed around the coast during summer, it has been observed by Mr. Glennon about Galway and Achill, and by Mr. Irwin, of Roscommon, specimens have been obtained upon the northern extremity of the island, which were described by him as being most difficult to shoot, from the rapidity of their flight, glancing past the boat in an instant, and if suspecting danger gliding sideways, and disappearing in a few seconds, the long pointed wing and easy flight at once distinguish them when observed.

On the east coast it appears much more limited in numbers, and seldom ever ventures into Dublin Bay. One shot there in 1833, by Mr. Massey, is in our possession. However, it is only at Lambay that we can gain any insight into its habits, as it is known to the inhabitants, and the fishermen along the coast, by the name of mackerel cock, from its preceding the appearance of that fish upon the coast.

When visiting that island we were informed of their occurring at one time rather plentifully, and that they still frequented it to nidify; the single white egg found in burrows above the rocks being correctly described by our informants, according to whom there were about a dozen birds last year (1850), and fifty, twelve years previously. Two birds of this species were once obtained at Lambay by Mr. R. Montgomery, from a hole in the cliffs.

Obtaining the name of Manx petrel from their frequenting at one time in abundance their great British station at the Isle of Man, they are now almost a rare bird in its vicinity.

In many instances having mentioned Lambay as a breeding haunt for sea-fowl, it may not be uninteresting to enumerate the different species which tenant the precipitous eastern side of the island during the season of incubation:—the common and green cormorants, the common and black guillemots, razor-bill, puffin, shearwater, great and lesser black-backed gulls, herring and common gulls, and kittiwakes.

Amongst the land-birds which frequent the same face of the rocks, we find the peregrine (rarely of late years), the kestrel, raven, hooded crow, jackdaw, and stare (the chough

is also said to nidify in rare instances), the wheatear, window martin, swift, and rock pigeon.

Of the uninviting situations chosen by those birds for incubation we might agree with Shakspere in saying,—

> "Where they
> Most breed and haunt I have observed the air
> Is delicate."

On the great breeding place of the terns, at the Rock a Bill, or Cow and Calf Rocks, situated to the north of Lambay, we have observed the sandwich, roseate, common, and Arctic terns, which breed upon the larger rock, whilst on the smaller one the herring and common gulls incubate; we have also found the rock pipit nestling in the thin, wiry grasses, the same kind selected by some of the terns.

Habitat—Northern Europe.

Species 259.—The Dusky Shearwater.

Puffinus obscurus. Yarrell.
Petrel obscura. Temm.

Owing to the kindness of William Yarrell, Esq., F. L. S., &c., we are enabled to notice the occurrence of this rare shearwater, from a specimen exhibited at a meeting of the Linnæan Society on the 7th of June, and from the elaborate paper on which we take the following extracts:

"This interesting bird, new, as I believe, to the British islands, was brought to me by B. Blackburn, Esq., of Valentia Harbour, in the county of Kerry, who afterwards sent me the following note of its occurrence.

"'The petrel which I left with you this morning flew on board a small sloop off the Island of Valentia, on the south-west coast of Ireland, late in the evening of the 11th of May last. Mrs. Blackburn had never observed it before on our coast, and we concluded it to be the *Puffinus obscurus* of Temminck and Gould.

"'It made no attempt either to run or fly away, and suffered itself to be handled without exhibiting alarm; and though apparently strong and vigorous, manifested quite an Oriental resignation to its fate.'"

Described by Vernon Harcourt, Esq., in his published "Sketch of Madeira," Mr. Yarrell gives the following extract descriptive of its habits:

"'The dusky petrel is a very tame bird, and will live upon almost anything; it runs along the ground on its belly, and

uses its curious-shaped bill in climbing up the rocks. Those I had in my possession alive were some of them caught with fish-hooks baited with meat, by the Portuguese, and some taken by the hand in the day-time from underneath stones, where they hide from the light.' The egg, and they lay but one, measures one inch and seven-eighths in length, by one inch and three-eighths in breadth, rather smaller at one end than at the other, and pure white."

Having so far availed ourselves of Mr. Yarrell's remarks, we can only regret that our present limits prevent more notice of the critical research so amply displayed upon the subject.

Habitat—North America.

Genus CXV.—Thalassidroma (Storm Petrel).

Species 260.—The Fork-tailed Storm Petrel.

Thalassidroma Leachii. Temm.
Thalassidrome de Leach. Temm.

The Petrels, the last in order and least in size of the great order of the Natatores, are remarkable for the many strange traditions ignorance has invested them with.

Distinguished by the dark appearance of their plumage, they appear as if habited in perpetual mourning, for the sad scenes they had passed through, and for those they are about to herald. Rarely met with or obtained in our island, unless after the prevalence of a gale blowing from the sea, in most cases it is found inland, driven thither by the storms, which refused protection to the bird which seamen believe to have been raised for its own enjoyment.

One in our collection was obtained in a dying state in a snipe bog near Dundalk, after a severe gale in 1848. It lived for a few days in the possession of the gentleman who obtained it, but refused all sustenance. Confinement and captivity would have been too great a change from the boundless "world of waters" it had wandered over previously.

Storm petrels have been found in a similar manner in Roscommon, Galway, and upon the Dublin coasts.

Habitat—North America.

Species 261.—The Storm Petrel.

Thalassidroma pelagica. Jardine.
Thalassidrome tempête. Temm.
Mother Carey's Chicken. Martenoil.

This interesting species, the smallest in size of our Irish web-footed birds, is indigenous, and remains on our coasts during the year. However, to the great majority it is a rare bird, opportunities of seeing it seldom occur, as its "residence on the waters" precludes all, except the mariner and the naturalist, from observing it.

Its appearance to the wave-tossed mariner brings dread and apprehension of fearful dangers, which find a place at once in their predisposed minds; whilst, on the contrary, the ornithologist who fortunately observes it, looks with pleasure after the wave-washed course of this harmless and unjustly maligned bird. The food of the storm petrel consists for the most part of animal substances and mollusca, obtained floating on the surface of the ocean; although its appreciation of the comforts of civilized life is easily observable by its allowing itself to be captured on a fish-hook, baited with bread or meat; and, when following in the wake of vessels, small particles of bread, fat, or suet, are eagerly picked up and swallowed. Not being annoyed, they will frequent the vicinity of one vessel, perhaps, for weeks following in her wake, regardless alike of storm or sunshine, light or darkness, and continue undeviatingly in their course.

The storm petrel breeds principally about the bare and deserted islands of the west of Ireland, either in holes in the earth or under rocks, and often in singularly damp situations. It lays but one egg, oval in form and pure white in colour; the young when hatched have a curious appearance, and are covered entirely with down. On the Galway coast, where they are denominated "martenoils," J. P. Patten, Esq., has frequently obtained both the young and eggs.

By the ancients the petrel was believed to hatch its eggs beneath its wing, as at all seasons, and in every sea, they had been remarked flying, whilst their appearance on land was never noticed.

The prejudices against these "wanderers of the waters" are many, and principally exist in the minds of the seafaring men of all countries,—alike with the boatmen of the *Claddagh*, the fishermen of Cadiz, and the seamen of the Cyclades.

Nor is the turbaned follower of the prophet exempt from the prejudices of the Christian, as he mutters the accustomed ejaculation of his creed when he sees the "souls of the Giaours"* wing their way across the waters of the Golden Horn. And as they are never observed to rest upon the Bosphorus, they have been denominated, "les âmes damnes,"

"The bird of Thrace
Whose pinion knows no resting place."

The sailor reclines listlessly against the mast, looking unmoved on the quivering bosom of the Atlantic, covered with a thousand tints of the golden radiance of the declining sun; anon a glance at the black piled-up clouds in the "wind's eye" is followed by the fastening of some loose rope. A slight ripple near the stern, and a sudden phosphoric light through the dark waters, give warning of the shark. Coolly and confidently he is regarded by the mariner, possibly the relative distance of "meum et tuum" passing in his "mind's eye." A low sibilant cry, as if from beneath the stern, causes the sailor to peer intently through the darkness to verify his suspicions. Alas! too true, he dimly discerns the dreaded petrel running upon the crested waters. Fearless before of storm or shark, the mariner quails at the presence of a bird.

A sailor approaches and is hailed by the perturbed Jack:— "I say, Bill." "Well Jack, what is it?" "Did you see them?" "See who, what?" "They are astern." "Who, what's astern, man? speak out." Jack, in a low, decided tone, answers, "Mother Carey's chickens." The courage of the confident Bill oozes from his fingers' ends at the dreaded words, and in an incredibly short time the worthy pair succeed to perfection in damping the energies of the entire crew.

Before lifting our voice against those prejudices, it must be admitted that, to the unthinking mariner the appearance of the petrel when perhaps a thousand miles from any land, apparently untired, and seldom seen resting or eating, together with its ominous colour, and as it is generally believed to ap-

* A species of shore-bird frequenting the Bosphorus, and believed by the Turks to be the souls of infidels condemned to wander so till the day of judgment.

pear on the advent of a storm,—small wonder that all have conspired in placing the stormy petrel in the unconscious position it holds:

> " O'er the deep! o'er the deep,
> Where the whale, and the shark, and the sword-fish sleep,
> Outflying the blast and the driving rain,
> The petrel telleth her tale in vain.
> For the mariner curseth the warning bird
> Who bringeth him news of storms unheard.
> Oh! thus does the prophet of good or ill
> Meet hate from the creatures he serveth still;
> Yet he ne'er falters. So, petrel, spring
> Once more o'er the waves on thy stormy wing.

Indigenous.

SYSTEMATIC ARRANGEMENT

OF

THE BIRDS OF IRELAND.

ORDER I.—RAPTORES (BIRDS OF PREY).

FAMILY I.—VULTURIDÆ (VULTURES).

GENUS I.—VULTUR (VULTURE).

1. Vultur fulvus. Griffon Vulture. *Straggler.*

FAMILY II.—FALCONIDÆ (FALCONS, AND ALLIED SPECIES).

GENUS II.—FALCO (FALCON).

2. Falco gyrfalco. Gyr Falcon. *Straggler.*
3. ,, peregrinus. Peregrine Falcon. *Resident.*
4. ,, subbuteo. Hobby Falcon. *Straggler.*
5. ,, rufipes. Orange-legged Falcon. *Straggler.*
6. ,, æsalon. Merlin Falcon. *Resident.*
7. ,, tinnunculus. Kestrel Falcon. *Resident.*

GENUS III.—ACCIPITER (HAWK).

8. Accipiter palumbarius. Goshawk. *Straggler.*
9. ,, nisus. Sparrow Hawk. *Resident.*

GENUS IV.—AQUILA (EAGLE).

10. Aquila chrysætos. Golden Eagle. *Resident.*
11. ,, nœvia. Spotted Eagle. *Straggler.*
12. ,, albicilla. Sea Eagle. *Resident.*

GENUS V.—PANDION (OSPREY).

13. Pandion haliætus. Osprey. *Straggler.*

GENUS VI.—BUTEO (BUZZARD).

14. Buteo vulgaris. Common Buzzard. *Resident.*
15. ,, lagopus. Rough-legged Buzzard. *Straggler.*

GENUS VII.—PERNIS (BEE HAWK).

16. Pernis Apivorus. Honey Buzzard. *Straggler.*

GENUS VIII.—CIRCUS (HARRIER).

17. Circus æruginosus. Marsh Harrier. *Resident.*
18. ,, cyaneus. Hen Harrier. *Resident.*
19. ,, cineraceus. Montagu's Harrier. *Straggler.*

FAMILY III.—STRIGIDÆ (OWLS).

GENUS IX.—STRIX (BARN OWL).

20. Strix flammea. Barn Owl. *Resident.*

GENUS X.—OTUS (EARED OWL).

21. Otus vulgaris. Long-eared Owl. *Resident.*
22. ,, brachyotus. Short-eared Owl. *Wint. Vis.*

GENUS XI.—BUBO (EAGLE OWL).

23. Bubo maximus. Eagle Owl. *Straggler.*

GENUS XII.—SCOPS (SCOPS OWL).

24. Scops Aldrovandi. Scops-eared Owl. *Straggler.*

GENUS XIII.—SYRNIA (SNOWY OWL).

25. Syrnia nyctea. Snowy Owl. *Straggler.*

ORDER II.—INSESSORES (PERCHING BIRDS).

SUB-ORDER—DENTIROSTRES (NOTCHED-BILLED BIRDS).

FAMILY IV.—LANIADÆ (SHRIKES).

GENUS XIV.—LANIUS (SHRIKE).

26. Lanius excubitor. Great Grey Shrike. *Straggler.*

FAMILY V.—MYOTHERINÆ (ANTCATCHERS AND ALLIED SPECIES).

GENUS XV.—CINCLUS (DIPPER).

27. Cinclus aquaticus. Water Ousel. *Resident.*

FAMILY VI.—MERULINÆ THRUSHES AND ALLIED SPECIES).

GENUS XVI.—ORIOLUS (ORIOLE).

28. Oriolus galbula. Golden Oriole. *Straggler.*

GENUS XVII.—TURDUS (THRUSH).

29.	Turdus viscivorus. Missel Thrush.	*Resident.*
30.	,, iliacus. Redwing.	*Wint. Vis.*
31.	,, pilaris. Fieldfare.	*Wint. Vis.*
32.	,, musicus. Song Thrush.	*Resident.*
33.	,, Whitei. White's Thrush.	*Straggler.*
34.	,, merula. Blackbird.	*Resident.*
35.	,, torquatus. Ring Ousel.	*Sum. Vis.*
36.	,, aurigaster. Gold-vented Thrush.	*Straggler.*

FAMILY VII.—SAXICOLINÆ (STONECHATS, AND ALLIED SPECIES).

GENUS XVIII.—ERITHACUS (REDBREAST).

37.	Erithacus rubecula. Common Redbreast.	*Resident.*

GENUS XIX.—SAXICOLA (STONECHAT).

38.	Saxicola œnanthe. Wheatear.	*Sum. Vis.*
39.	,, rubicola. Stonechat.	*Resident.*
40.	,, rubetra. Whinchat.	*Sum. Vis.*

GENUS XX.—RUTICILLA (REDSTART).

41.	Ruticilla phœnicurus. Common Redstart.	*Straggler.*
42.	,, tithys. Black Redstart.	*Straggler.*

FAMILY VIII.—SYLVIADÆ (WARBLERS).

GENUS XXI.—CURRUCA (BLACKCAP).

43.	Curruca atricapilla. Blackcap.	*Straggler.*
44.	,, hortensis. Garden Warbler.	*Straggler.*
45.	,, cinerea. Whitethroat.	*Sum. Vis.*

GENUS XXII.—SYLVIA (WARBLER).

46.	Sylvia trochilus. Willow Warbler.	*Sum. Vis.*
47.	,, hippolais. Chiff Chaff.	*Sum. Vis.*

GENUS XXIII.—SALICARIA (SEDGE BIRD).

48.	Salicaria phragmites. Sedge Warbler.	*Sum. Vis.*
49.	,, locustella. Grasshopper Warbler.	*Straggler.*

GENUS XXIV.—REGULUS (KING BIRD).

50.	Regulus cristatus. Golden-crested Wren.	*Resident.*

FAMILY IX.—PARINÆ (TITS).

GENUS XXV.—PARUS (TIT).

51.	Parus major. Great Tit.	*Resident.*
52.	,, cœruleus. Blue Tit.	*Resident.*
53.	,, ater. Cole Tit.	*Resident.*
54.	,, palustris. Marsh Tit.	*Resident.*
55.	,, caudatus. Long-tailed Tit.	*Resident.*

GENUS XXVI.—ACCENTOR (CHANTER).

56. Accentor modularis. Hedge Accentor. *Resident.*

FAMILY X.—MOTACILLINÆ (WAGTAILS).

GENUS XXVII.—MOTACILLA (WAGTAIL).

57. Motacilla Yarrellii. Pied Wagtail. *Resident.*
58. ,, boarula. Grey Wagtail. *Resident.*
59. ,, flava. Yellow Wagtail. *Sum. Vis.*

FAMILY XI.—AMPELINÆ (CHATTERERS).

GENUS XXVIII.—BOMBYCILLA (WAXWING).

60. Bombycilla garrula. Bohemian Waxwing. *Straggler.*

FAMILY XII.—MUSCICAPIDÆ (FLYCATCHERS).

GENUS XXIX.—MUSCICAPA (FLYCATCHER).

61. Muscicapa grisola. Spotted Flycatcher. *Sum. Vis.*

SUB-ORDER.—CONIROSTRES (CONE-BILLED BIRDS).

FAMILY XIII.—CORVIDÆ (CROWS).

GENUS XXX.—CORVUS (CROW).

62. Corvus corax. Raven. *Resident.*
63. ,, corone. Carrion Crow. *Resident.*
64. ,, cornix. Hooded Crow. *Resident.*
65. ,, frugilegus. Rook. *Resident.*
66. ,, monedula. Jackdaw. *Resident.*

GENUS XXXI.—PICA (PIE).

67. Pica caudata. Magpie. *Resident.*

GENUS XXXII.—GARRULUS (JAY).

68. Garrulus glandarius. Jay. *Resident.*

GENUS XXXIII.—FREGILUS (CHOUGH).

69. Fregilus graculus. Chough. *Resident.*

GENUS XXXIV.—STURNUS (STARE).

70. Sturnus vulgaris. Stare. *Resident.*

GENUS XXXV.—PASTOR (PASTOR).

71. Pastor roseus. Rose-coloured Pastor. *Straggler.*

FAMILY XIV.—FRINGILLIDÆ (FINCHES, AND ALLIED SPECIES).

Genus XXXVI.—Coccothraustes (Grosbeak).

72. Coccothraustes vulgaris. Hawfinch. *Straggler.*
73. ,, chloris. Greenfinch. *Resident.*

Genus XXXVII.—Linaria (Linnet).

74. Linaria canabina. Grey Linnet. *Resident.*
75. ,, minor. Lesser Redpole. *Resident.*
76. ,, flavirostris. Mountain Linnet. *Resident.*

Genus XXXVIII.—Carduelis (Goldfinch).

77. Carduelis elegans. Goldfinch. *Resident.*
78. ,, spinus. Siskin. *Straggler.*

Genus XXXIX.—Fringilla (Finch).

79. Fringilla cœlebs. Chaffinch. *Resident.*
80. ,, montifringilla. Mountain Finch. *Wint. Vis.*

Genus XL.—Passer (Sparrow).

81. Passer domesticus. Common Sparrow. *Resident.*

Genus XLI.—Emberiza (Bunting).

82. Emberiza miliaria. Common Bunting, *Resident.*
83. ,, citrinella. Yellow Bunting. *Resident.*
84. ,, schœniculus. Reed Bunting. *Resident.*

Genus XLII.—Plectrophanes (Snow Bird).

85. Plectrophanes nivalis. Snow Bunting. *Wint. Vis.*

Genus XLIII.—Pyrrhula (Bullfinch).

86. Pyrrhula vulgaris. Common Bullfinch. *Resident.*
87. ,, enucleator. Pine Bullfinch. *Straggler.*

Genus XLIV.—Loxia (Crossbill).

88. Loxia curvirostra. Common Crossbill. *Straggler.*
89. ,, leucoptera. White-winged Crossbill. *Straggler.*

FAMILY XV.—ALAUDINÆ (LARKS, AND ALLIED SPECIES).

Genus XLV.—Alauda (Lark).

90. Alauda arvensis. Skylark. *Resident.*
91. ,, arborea. Woodlark. *Resident.*

Genus XLVI.—Anthus (Pipit).

92. Anthus pratensis. Meadow Pipit. *Resident.*
93. ,, aquaticus. Rock Pipit. *Resident.*

SUB-ORDER.—SCANSORES (CLIMBERS).

FAMILY XVI.—PICIDÆ (WOODPECKERS).

Genus XLVII.—Picus (Woodpecker).

94. Picus major. Greater Spotted Woodpecker. *Straggler.*
95. ,, minor. Lesser Spotted Woodpecker. *Straggler.*
96. ,, viridis. Green Woodpecker. *Straggler.*

Genus XLVIII.—Certhia (Creeper).

97. Certhia familiaris. Creeper. *Resident.*

Genus XLIX.—Troglodytes (Wren).

98. Troglodytes Europæus. Common Wren. *Resident.*

FAMILY XVII.—CUCULIDÆ (CUCKOOS).

Genus L.—Cuculus (Cuckoo).

99. Cuculus canorus. Common Cuckoo. *Sum. Vis.*
100. ,, glandarius. Great Spotted Cuckoo. *Straggler.*
101. ,, Americanus. Yellow-billed American Cuckoo. *Straggler.*

SUB-ORDER.—TENUIROSTRES (SLENDER-BILLED BIRDS).

FAMILY XVIII.—UPUPIDÆ (HOOPOE).

Genus LI.—Upupa (Hoopoe).

102. Upupa Epops. Hoopoe. *Straggler.*

SUB-ORDER.—FISSIROSTRES (WIDE-MOUTHED BIRDS).

FAMILY XIX.—MEROPIDÆ (BEE-EATERS).

Genus LII.—Merops (Bee-Eater).

103. Merops Apiaster. Bee-Eater. *Straggler.*

Genus LIII.—Coracius (Roller).

104. Coracias garrula. Roller. *Straggler.*

FAMILY XX.—ALCEDINÆ (KINGFISHERS).

Genus LIV.—Alcedo (Kingfisher).

105.	Alcedo ispida.	Kingfisher.	*Resident.*
106.	,, alcyon.	Belted Kingfisher.	*Straggler.*

FAMILY XXI.—CAPRIMULGIDÆ (GOATSUCKERS).

Genus LV.—Caprimulgus (Goatsucker).

107.	Caprimulgus Europæus.	Goatsucker.	*Sum. Vis.*

FAMILY XXII.—HIRUNDINÆ (SWALLOWS).

Genus LVI.—Hirundo (Swallow).

108.	Hirundo rustica.	Chimney Swallow.	*Sum. Vis.*
109.	,, urbica.	Window Martin.	*Sum. Vis.*
110.	,, riparia.	Sand Martin.	*Sum. Vis.*
111.	,, purpurea.	Purple Martin.	*Straggler.*

Genus LVII.—Cypselus (Swift).

112.	Cypselus apus.	Common Swift.	*Sum. Vis.*
113.	,, Alpinus.	Alpine Swift.	*Straggler.*

ORDER III.—RASORES (SCRAPING BIRDS).

FAMILY XXIII.—COLUMBINÆ (PIGEONS).

Genus LVIII.—Columba (Pigeon).

114.	Columba palumbus.	Ring Dove.	*Resident.*
115.	,, livia.	Rock Dove.	*Resident.*
116.	,, turtur.	Turtle Dove.	*Straggler.*

FAMILY XXIV.—PHASIANIDÆ (PHEASANTS).

Genus LIX.—Phasianus (Pheasant).

117.	Phasianus Colchicus.	Common Pheasant.	*Resident.*

FAMILY XXV.—TATRAONIDÆ (GROUSE).

Genus LX.—Lagopus (Ptarmigan).

118.	Lagopus Scoticus.	Red Grouse.	*Resident.*

FAMILY XXVI.—PERDICINÆ (PARTRIDGES AND ALLIED SPECIES).

Genus LXI.—Perdix (Partridge).

119.	Perdix cinerea.	Common Partridge.	*Resident.*

GENUS LXII.—COTURNIX (QUAIL).

120. Coturnix vulgaris. Quail. *Sum. Vis.*

FAMILY XXVII.—OTIDÆ (BUSTARDS).

GENUS LXIII.—OTIS (BUSTARD).

121. Otis minor. Little Bustard. *Straggler.*

ORDER IV.—GRALLATORES (WADING BIRDS).

FAMILY XXVIII.—ARDEADÆ (HERONS).

GENUS LXIV.—ARDEA (HERON).

122. Ardea cinerea. Common Heron. *Resident.*
123. ,, purpurea. Purple Heron. *Straggler.*
124. ,, garzetta. Egret Heron. *Straggler.*
125. ,, comata. Squacco Heron. *Straggler.*

GENUS LXV.—BOTAURUS (BITTERN).

126. Botaurus stellaris. Common Bittern. *Straggler.*
127. ,, lentiginosus. American Bittern. *Straggler.*
128. ,, minutus. Little Bittern. *Straggler.*

GENUS LXVI.—NYCTICORAX (NIGHT HERON).

129. Nycticorax Gardenii. Night Heron. *Straggler.*

GEUNS LXVII.—CICONIA (STORK).

130. Ciconia alba. White Stork. *Straggler.*

GENUS LXVIII.—PLATALEA (SPOONBILL).

131. Platalea leucorodia. White Spoonbill. *Straggler.*

GENUS LXIX.—GRUS (CRANE).

132. Grus cinerea. Common Crane. *Straggler.*

FAMILY XXIX.—IBIDINÆ (IBISES).

GENUS LXX.—IBIS (IBIS).

133. Ibis falcinellus. Glossy Ibis. *Straggler.*

FAMILY XXX.—SCOLOPACIDÆ (SNIPES, AND ALLIED SPECIES).

GENUS LXXI.—NUMENIUS (CURLEW).

134. Numenius arquata. Curlew. *Resident.*
135. ,, pheopus. Whimbrel. *Sum. Vis.*

GENUS LXXII.—SCOLOPAX (SNIPE).

136.	Scolopax rusticola. Woodcock.	*Wint. Vis.*
137.	,, major. Great Snipe.	*Straggler.*
138.	,, Sabini. Sabine's Snipe.	*Straggler.*
139.	,, gallinago. Common Snipe.	*Wint. Vis.*
140.	,, gallinula. Jack Snipe.	*Wint. Vis.*

GENUS LXXIII.— LIMOSA (GODWIT).

141.	Limosa melanura. Black-tailed Godwit.	*Wint. Vis.*
142.	,, rufa. Common Godwit.	*Wint. Vis.*

GENUS LXXIV.—MACHETES (RUFF).

143.	Machetes pugnax. Ruff.	*Straggler.*

GENUS LXXV.—TOTANUS (TATTLER).

144.	Totanus fuscus. Spotted Redshank.	*Straggler.*
145.	,, calidris. Common Redshank.	*Resident.*
146.	,, glottis. Greenshank.	*Wint. Vis.*
147.	,, ochropus. Green Sandpiper.	*Straggler.*
148.	,, hypoleucus. Common Sandpiper.	*Sum. Vis.*

GENUS LXXVI.—TRINGA (SANDPIPER).

149.	Tringa variabilis. Purre or Dunlin.	*Wint. Vis.*
150.	,, subarquata. Pigmy Curlew.	*Straggler.*
151.	,, Platyrhyncha. Broad-billed Sandpiper.	*Straggler.*
152.	,, rufescens. Buff-breasted Sandpiper.	*Straggler.*
153.	,, Schintzii. Schintz's Sandpiper.	*Straggler.*
154.	,, minuta. Little Stint.	*Straggler.*
155.	,, Temminckii. Temminck's Stint.	*Straggler.*
156.	,, maritima. Purple Sandpiper.	*Wint. Vis.*
157.	,, canutus. Knot.	*Wint. Vis.*

GENUS LXXVII.—HIMANTOPUS (STILTSHANK).

158.	Himantopus melanopterus. Black-winged Stilt.	*Straggler.*

GENUS LXXVIII.—RECURVIROSTRA (CURVED BILL).

159.	Recurvirostra avocetta. Avosett.	*Straggler.*

GENUS LXXIX.—STREPSILAS (TURNSTONE).

160.	Strepsilas interpres. Turnstone.	*Wint. Vis.*

GENUS LXXX.—OSTRALEGUS (OYSTER PLOVER).

161.	Ostralegus hæmatopus. Oyster Plover.	*Resident.*

GENUS LXXXI.—PHALAROPUS (PHALAROPE).

162.	Phalaropus lobatus. Grey Phalarope.	*Straggler.*

GENUS LXXXII.—ARENARIA (SANDERLING).

163. Arenaria calidris. Sanderling. *Wint. Vis.*

FAMILY XXXI.—CHARADRIADÆ (PLOVERS).

GENUS LXXXIII.—ŒDICNEMUS (THICKNEE).

164. Œdicnemus crepitans. Great Plover. *Straggler.*

GENUS LXXXIV.—SQUATAROLA (PLOVER).

165. Squatarola cinerea. Gray Plover. *Wint. Vis.*
166. ,, pluvialis. Golden Plover. *Resident.*

GENUS LXXXV.—VANELLUS (LAPWING).

167. Vanellus cristatus. Lapwing. *Resident.*

GENUS LXXXVI.—CHARADRIUS (SAND PLOVER).

168. Charadrius morinellus. Dotterel. *Straggler.*
169. ,, hiaticula. Ring Dotterel. *Resident.*
170. ,, Cantianus. Kentish Dotterel. *Straggler.*

GENUS LXXXVII.—GLAREOLA (PRATINCOLE).

171. Glareola torquata. Collared Pratincole. *Straggler.*

FAMILY XXXII.—RALLIDÆ (RAILS).

GENUS LXXXVIII.—RALLUS (RAIL).

172. Rallus aquaticus. Water Rail. *Resident.*

GENUS LXXXIX.—CREX (CRAKE).

173. Crex pratensis. Corn Crake. *Sum. Vis.*
174. ,, porzana. Spotted Crake. *Straggler.*
175. ,, Baillonii. Baillon's Crake. *Straggler.*

GENUS XC.—GALLINULA (WATER HEN).

176. Gallinula chloropus. Water Hen. *Resident.*
177. ,, Martinica. Purple Water Hen. *Straggler.*

GENUS XCI.—FULICA (COOT).

178. Fulica atra. Baldcoot. *Resident.*

ORDER V.—NATATORES.—(SWIMMING BIRDS).

FAMILY XXXIII.—ANSERINÆ (GEESE).

Genus XCII.—Anser (Goose).

179.	Anser ferus. Gray-lag Goose.	*Wint. Vis.*
180.	,, segetum. Bean Goose.	*Wint. Vis.*
181.	,, erythropus. Whitefronted Goose.	*Wint. Vis.*
182.	,, bernicla. Bernacle Goose.	*Wint. Vis.*
183.	,, brenta. Brent Goose.	*Wint. Vis.*
184.	,, Canadensis. Canada Goose.	*Straggler.*
185.	,, Ægyptiacus. Egyptian Goose.	*Straggler.*

Genus XCIII.—Cygnus (Swan).

186.	Cygnus ferus. Hooping Swan.	*Wint. Vis.*
187.	,, Bewickii. Bewick's Swan.	*Wint. Vis.*

FAMILY XXXIV.—ANATIDÆ (DUCKS).

Genus XCIV.—Tadorna (Shelldrake).

188.	Tadorna rutila. Ruddy Shelldrake.	*Straggler.*
189.	,, vulpanser. Shelldrake.	*Resident.*

Genus XCV.—Anas (Duck).

190.	Anas boschas. Wild Duck.	*Resident.*
191.	,, crecca. Common Teal.	*Wint. Vis.*
192.	,, circia. Gargany.	*Straggler.*
193.	,, acuta. Pintail.	*Wint. Vis.*
194.	,, strepera. Gadwall.	*Straggler.*
195.	,, clypeata. Shoveller.	*Wint. Vis.*
196.	,, penelope. Widgeon.	*Wint. Vis.*

FAMILY XXXV.—FULIGULINÆ (SEA DUCKS).

Genus XCVI.—Fuligula (Pochard).

197.	Fuligula marila. Scaup Pochard.	*Wint. Vis.*
198.	,, cristata. Tufted Pochard.	*Wint. Vis.*
199.	,, ferina. Redheaded Pochard.	*Wint. Vis.*

Genus XCVII.—Clangula (Garrot).

200.	Clangula vulgaris. Golden-eye Garrot.	*Wint. Vis.*

Genus XCVIII.—Harelda (Hareld).

201.	Harelda glacialis. Long-tailed Duck.	*Straggler.*

Genus XCIX.—Oidemia (Scoter).

202.	Oidemia perspicillata. Surf Scoter.	*Straggler.*
203.	,, fusca. Velvet Scoter.	*Wint. Vis.*
204.	,, nigra. Black Scoter.	*Wint. Vis.*

GENUS C.—SOMATERIA (EIDER DUCK.)

205.	Somateria mollissima. Eider Duck.	*Straggler.*
206.	,, spectabilis. King Eider.	*Straggler.*

FAMILY XXXVI.—MERGANSERINÆ (MERGANSERS).

GENUS CI.—MERGUS (MERGANSER).

207	Mergus albellus. Smew.	*Wint. Vis.*
208	,, cucullatus. Hooded Merganser.	*Straggler.*
209.	,, serrator. Red-breasted Merganser.	*Resident.*
210.	,, merganser. Goosander.	*Wint. Vis.*

FAMILY XXXVII.—COLYMBIDINÆ (DIVERS).

GENUS CII.—PODICEPS (GREBE).

211.	Podiceps cristatus. Tippet Grebe.	*Resident.*
212.	,, rubricollis. Red-necked Grebe.	*Straggler.*
213.	,, cornutus. Horned Grebe.	*Straggler.*
214.	,, auritus. Eared Grebe.	*Straggler.*
215.	,, minor. Little Grebe.	*Resident.*

GENUS CIII.—COLYMBUS (DIVER).

216.	Colymbus septentrionalis. Red-throated Diver.	*Wint. Vis.*
217.	Colymbus Arcticus. Black-throated Diver.	*Straggler.*
218.	,, glacialis. Great Northern Diver.	*Wint. Vis.*

FAMILY XXXVIII.—ALCADÆ (AUKS).

GENUS CIV.—URIA (GUILLEMOT).

219.	Uria troile. Common Guillemot.	*Sum. Vis.*
220.	lacrymans. Bridled Guillemot.	*Straggler.*
221.	grylle. Black Guillemot.	*Sum. Vis.*

GENUS CV.—MERGULUS (LITTLE AUK).

222.	Mergulus alle. Little Auk.	*Straggler.*

GENUS CVI.—ALCA (AUK).

223.	Alca impennis. Great Auk.	*Straggler.*
224.	,, torda. Razor-bill.	*Sum. Vis.*

GENUS CVII.—FRATERCULA (PUFFIN).

225.	Fratercula Arctica (Puffin).	*Sum. Vis.*

FAMILY XXXIX.—PELICANIDÆ (PELICANS).

GENUS CVIII.—PHALACRACORAX (CORMORANT).

226.	Phalacracorax carbo. Common Cormorant.	*Resident.*
227.	Phalacracorax cristatus. Green Cormorant.	*Resident.*

GENUS CIX.—SULA (GANNET).

228. Sula Bassana. Gannet. *Sum. Vis.*

FAMILY XL.—STERNIDÆ (TERNS).

GENUS CX.—STERNA (TERN).

229. Sterna velox. Ruppell's Tern. *Straggler.*
230. ,, Cantiaca. Sandwich Tern. *Straggler.*
231. ,, Arctica. Arctic Tern. *Sum. Vis.*
232. ,, hirundo. Common Tern. *Sum. Vis.*
233. ,, Dougallii. Roseate Tern. *Sum. Vis.*
234. ,, leucopareia. Whiskered Tern. *Straggler.*
235. ,, nigra. Black Tern. *Straggler.*
236 ,, leucoptera. White-winged Black Tern. *Straggler.*
237. ,, minuta. Lesser Tern. *Sum. Vis.*
238. ,, stolida. Noddy. *Straggler.*

FAMILY XLI.—LARIDÆ (GULLS).

GENUS CXI.—LARUS (GULL).

239. Larus Sabini. Sabine's Gull. *Straggler.*
240. ,, minutus. Little Gull. *Straggler.*
241. ,, ridibundus. Black-headed Gull. *Resident.*
242. ,, Bonapartii. Bonaparte's Gull. *Straggler.*
243. ,, capistratus. Masked Gull. *Straggler.*
244. ,, marinus. Great Black-backed Gull. *Resident.*
245. ,, fuscus. Lesser Black-backed Gull. *Resident.*
246. ,, argentacus. Herring Gull. *Resident.*
247. ,, glaucus. Glaucous Gull. *Straggler.*
248. ,, Islandicus. Iceland Gull. *Straggler.*
249. ,, canus. Common Gull. *Resident.*
250. ,, eburneus. Ivory Gull. *Straggler.*
251. ,, rissa. Kittiwake. *Sum. Vis.*

GENUS CXII.—LESTRIS (SKUA.)

252. Lestris catarrhactes. Great Skua. *Straggler.*
253. ,, pomarinus. Pomarine Skua. *Straggler.*
254. ,, Richardsonii. Richardson's Skua. *Straggler.*
255. ,, parasiticus. Buffon's Skua. *Straggler.*

GENUS CXIII.—PROCELLARIA (FULMAR).

256. Procellaria glacialis. Fulmar. *Straggler.*

GENUS CXIV.—PUFFINUS (SHEARWATER).

257. Puffinus cinereus. Cinereous Shearwater. *Straggler.*
258. ,, Anglorum. Manx Shearwater. *Sum. Vis.*
259. ,, obscurus. Dusky Shearwater. *Straggler.*

GENUS CXV.—THALASSIDROMA (STORM PETREL).

260. Thalassidroma Leachii. Fork-tailed Storm Petrel. *Straggler.*
261. ,, pelagica. Storm Petrel. *Resident.*

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THE END.

ERRATA.

Page 12, line 5 from bottom, *under* q ila nævia *read* aigle criard.
" 14, " 7 from bottom, *for* haliæetus pandion *read* pandion haliæetus.
" 30, " 8 from bottom, *for* viscivorous *read* viscivorus.
" 34, " 6 from bottom, *for* Whitii read Whitei.
" 45, " 4 from top, *for* atracapilla *read* atricapilla.
" 72, " 6 from bottom, *for* Ranelagh *read* Stillorgan Park.
" 80, " 10 from bottom, *for* flavirostres *read* flavirostris.
" 105, " 12 from bottom, *for* coracius *read* coracias.
" 128, " 1 *for* perdricinæ *read* perdicinæ.
" " " 2 *for* perdrix *read* perdix.
" 130, " 7 from bottom, *for* otus read otis.
" 183, " 9 from top, *for* Baillionii *read* Baillonii.
" 259, " 6 from top, *for* Icelandicus *read* Islandicus.

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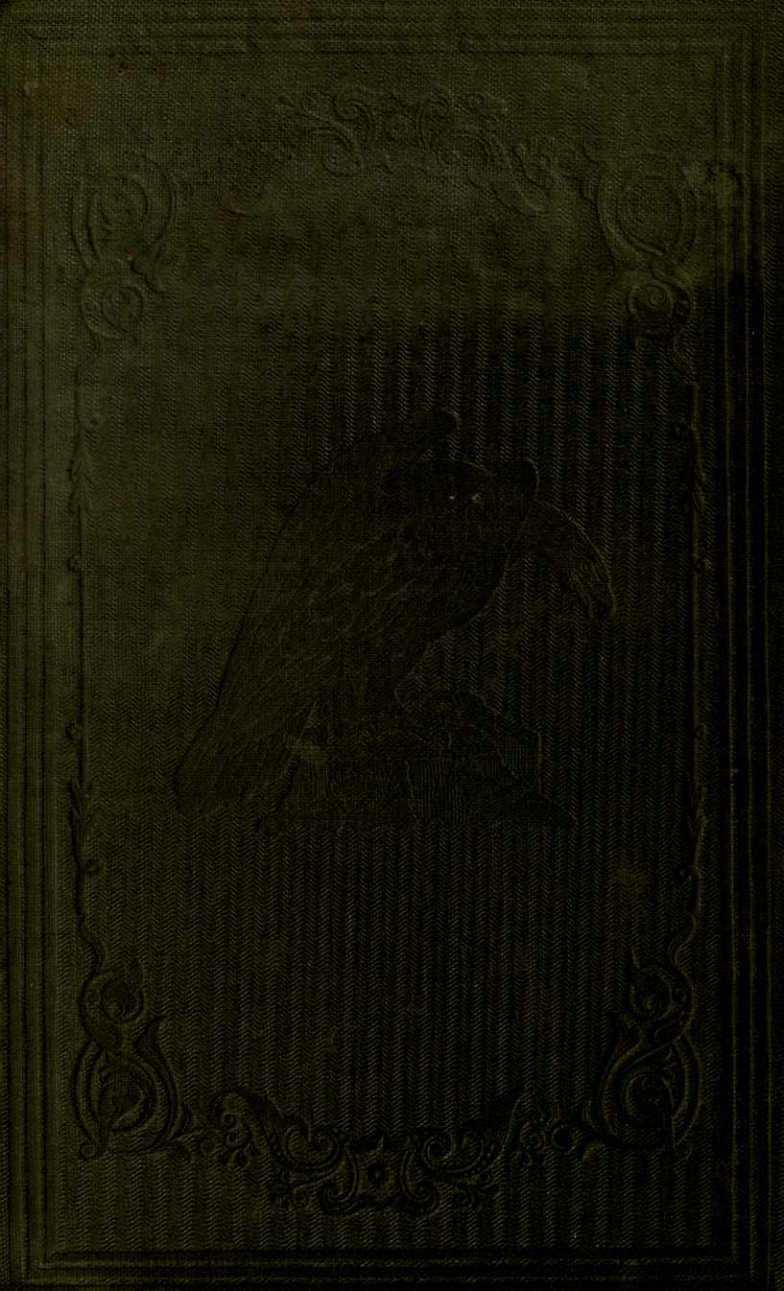
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